WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THE RURAL CHURCH

RALPH S. FELTON

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What's right with the rural
church

THE RURAL CHURCH IS THE FARMER'S MOST BELOVED INSTITUTION. IT IS STILL THE CENTER OF COMMUNITY LIFE

WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THE RURAL CHURCH

AN APPLICATION OF CHRISTIAN PRINCIPLES
TO THE NEW RURAL LIFE

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BY
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CHAPTER I

WHAT'S RIGHT WITH THE RURAL CHURCH

The Gist of the Chapter. For the past twenty years numerous articles have been written and many speeches have been made telling us what is wrong with the rural church. These analyses of the situation have been valuable. At the same time they have often been discouraging. While thinking so much about what is wrong we have forgotten what is right with the rural church.

The Church is the only institution in our country which serves the entire family. We need this agency to keep our families together. The Church is the only institution which sends missionaries to the ends of the earth. We need an institution to give us altruistic motives in this materialistic age. The Church is still the institution which brings us comfort in periods of sorrow and temptation. It has started practically all modern welfare work and continues to inspire social workers in their unselfish service. The teaching of the Church is still the best antidote for crime. Our greatest need in rural America is leadership, and the Church is one of the most successful schools for training leaders. The rural church, more than any other institution, is the social center in the countryside. Let us think for a while about what is right with the rural church.

Jesus taught in terms of the rural life of his day. He drew his lessons from the fields about him, from the flowers and birds, from the shepherd and the plowman. In the Scripture passage of this chapter he is asking his listeners to observe a man sowing in a field. The seed bed has not been well prepared. The little wooden plow has slidden around the thorn bushes at times and the shelves of rocks lie close beneath the soil in places. But Palestine is a fertile country. When the seed is given a chance in a well-tilled seed bed, it yields a good crop. Jesus draws the lesson that his gospel, likewise, will yield well if it is given a chance to grow.

In a hundred thousand rural churches in America the seed of the Word is still being sown. There are those who see only the thorny and stony ground, what they term the failures of the Church. As together we study this chapter, and those that follow, let us look for some of the encouraging things, some of the well-tilled fields, some of the hundredfold yields of the rural churches in America.

The Scripture

And when a great multitude came together, and they of every city resorted unto him, he spake by a parable: The sower went forth to sow his seed: and as he sowed, some fell by the way side; and it was trodden under foot, and the birds of the heaven devoured it. And other fell on the rock; and as soon as it grew, it withered away, because it had no moisture. And other fell amidst the thorns; and the thorns grew with it, and choked it. And other fell into the good ground, and grew, and brought forth fruit a hundredfold. As he said these things, he cried, He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.

And his disciples asked him what this parable might be. And he said, Unto you it is given to know the mysteries of the kingdom of God: but to the rest in parables; that seeing they may not see, and hearing they may not understand. Now the parable is this: The seed is the word of God. And those by the way side are they that have heard; then cometh the devil, and taketh away the word from their heart, that they may not believe and be saved. And those on the rock are they who, when they have heard, receive the word with joy; and these have no root, who for a while believe, and in time of temptation fall away. And that which fell among the thorns, these are they that have heard, and as they go on their way they are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection. And that in the good ground, these are such as in an honest and good heart, having heard the word, hold it fast, and bring forth fruit with patience.

—*Luke 8:4-15.*

THE CHURCH THE ONLY FAMILY INSTITUTION

We have many farm organizations in the countryside. The Patrons of Husbandry has 8,000 units with a total of 700,000 members. But it is a secret organization, which requires that its members be fourteen years of age or more. On Grange night the family is separated.

The Farm Bureau is a popular and practical organization for farmers. It discusses intelligently all phases of agriculture. The home economics section, sometimes called the Home Bureau, is equally important. These organizations, only twenty years old, have approximately a million members. But the father, as a rule, leaves the family behind when he attends a Farm Bureau demonstration or lecture.

Farm coöperatives have increased their membership rapidly during the last ten years. Two million farmers now belong to 12,000 coöperative marketing associations. Valuable as these economic organizations are, they are not family institutions.

The service clubs—the Rotary Club, the Kiwanis, the Zonta, and many others—take father or mother but not both, and they take none of the children.

A little girl in school was asked to give a definition of "home," to which she replied, "Home is where we stay while we are getting our automobile fixed." Too many things tend to break up the home.

The many new interests of the countryside are all valuable, no doubt, but all tend to divide the family. Mary belongs to the Girl Scouts, John to the Four-H Club, father to the Farm Bureau, and mother to her club or lodge, but all four can go together to the neighborhood church.

"Classes for all the family" is the announcement often heard in the Sunday School. In these days when families are separated by so many interests, the rural church brings them all together on Sunday morning. It is the only family organization left in the countryside to-day. It is of interest to all ages; it serves all; it unites all.

The words which Longfellow used to describe the village blacksmith are still applicable to the American farmer on Sunday morning:

He goes on Sunday to the church,
And sits among his boys;
He hears the parson pray and preach,
He hears his daughter's voice,
Singing in the village choir,
And it makes his heart rejoice.

May we not have a new appreciation of and a new loyalty to our greatest family institution, the rural church!

THE CHURCH THE ONLY ANTIDOTE FOR CRIME

We read much about "the crime wave." The financial tax of crime for the average American family has been estimated as high as thirty dollars per year. The cost in human happiness is much more. Friends and foes of prohibition blame each other for the increase in crime. Judges of juvenile courts blame parents. Parents lay the blame on the World War. But all agree that the Church is the only institution that can successfully stop the so-called crime wave.

A certain county has seven boys and five girls in reform schools. The average cost in taxes for each of these delinquents is $670.82 per year, or a total of $8,049.84. This includes only the amount paid out per year while these twelve children are in the reform schools. It does not include the police or probation officer fees, the court costs, or the possible cost in a prison later. A large sum of money to spend—$8,049.84 a year! One potential Sunday School class of twelve pupils!

In this same county five directors of religious education at a cost of only $7,500.00 are teaching 1,849 pupils in Week Day Church School classes and a thousand others in Vacation Church Schools. Twelve boys and girls without the influence of the Church cost more than the religious training of three thousand pupils. Crime is expensive. The Church is the only institution that can stop the crime wave among American youth.

A high-school girl in a rural village was on the verge of delinquency. A Sunday School teacher took time off from her busy life to win this girl's affection and enlist her in another type of venturesome living. Now she is in college preparing for Christian work. Thus the Church is saving countless young people from paying the wages of sin and saving the State from paying the cost of crime.

If we are interested in youth, we will stand by the Church and help to make it more interesting to young people. If we are interested only in saving taxes we will support the Church and help to make it more efficient.

THE RURAL CHURCH TRAINS LEADERS

During a single year the writer had the opportunity of attending county schools for rural leaders in eighteen counties. These meetings were held under the auspices of the Farm and Home Bureaus. The county agents selected the outstanding leaders among farmers and farm women to attend these meetings. The total attendance in the eighteen counties was 1,033.

Only eleven per cent of the thousand and more leaders are members of some lodge other than the Grange. This may indicate to some extent the place the lodges have had in affecting the lives of farm people.

Nearly half of this group, or forty-six per cent, are members of the Grange. In the lecturer's hour, in the offices, on the degree teams, and on committees, the Grange has trained its members for leadership. A goodly number of these prominent farm people are Grangers or Patrons of Husbandry.

Fifty-four per cent of these leaders are members of the Farm or Home Bureau. These organizations have brought out the latent forces of leadership in their members by placing responsibility on them for conducting demonstrations or teaching classes. Among the women especially, great stress is placed upon the development of "local leaders" for service in their communities.

In contrast with the eleven per cent who are members of lodges, or the forty-six per cent who belong to the Grange, or the fifty-four per cent who are members of the Farm or Home Bureau, we find eighty-six per cent who are members of the Church. These people have been selected by the county agricultural and home economics agents because of the high place of leadership each holds in these thousand different rural communities.

The eight hundred rural churches to which they belong started, no doubt, to train them back in the Beginners Class in Sunday School. As children they probably sang their first song or recited their first "piece" in connection with some Sunday School program. The Junior Choir brought out their native abilities. The Young People's Society took them at an impressionable age and gave them an office and many

responsibilities. Later, as they joined the throng of Sunday School teachers, their abilities were challenged from week to week.

"What's right with the Church?" you ask. It is contributing to every rural society, club, or organization by training leaders. The master of the National Grange is an active Church worker. The leaders of the big farm coöperatives are Church men. The Church is training these men to lead in the affairs of their states and in their community life.

In a certain state the leaders of the principal agricultural organizations were interviewed in order to measure the contribution in leadership which the Church is actually making. The president of the state federation of Farm Bureaus is a Congregational deacon. The Home Bureau state president is active in the Presbyterian Church. The master of the State Grange is an officer in the Reformed Church. The state lecturer is a Sunday School teacher in a Baptist church. The most influential man in the largest farm coöperative teaches a Sunday School class in his Methodist church. Thus the Church is constantly making its valuable contribution to modern rural life.

THE CHURCH THE SOURCE OF WELFARE WORK

These are days of new movements. The Church is old. How does it fit into the new day?

The men and women who are managing the social welfare matters of a certain county were listed to see if the Church is making its contribution to the county's welfare work. The results were as follows:

There are three county school superintendents. One is a Sunday School superintendent; the other two teach Sunday School classes. The two county nurses are active Church workers. The chairman of the county Health Committee is president of the women's society in her church. The three farmers who manage the county library are active in Sunday School work, one as a superintendent, the other two as teachers. The chairman of the Appropriations Committee of the county board of supervisors is treasurer of benevolences in his church. The chairman of the county Charities Committee teaches a

young men's Sunday School class. Thus the Church is providing welfare workers for each county and each community.

Let us not think of the Church as out of date because it is an old institution. The ancient Nile still waters the land of Egypt for each succeeding harvest. So the Church which has started hospitals, homes, and colleges, and provided deaconesses, nurses, and parish visitors, is still the same source of welfare work as the new movements come and go.

"What's right with the Church?" It is still sowing the seed of social welfare. Its "Good Samaritans" are found in places of responsibility in nearly every organization—poor relief, health, wholesome recreation, education, and public welfare in almost every community.

OUR ONLY MISSIONARY INSTITUTION

The Rotary Club in a county-seat town invited all the rural pastors of the county to a Rotary luncheon. The men sang songs and ate a good dinner and everyone seemed friendly. They called each other by their first names or, more often, by nicknames. One of the pastors, when leaving, said, "I wish I could get the men in my rural church together in an organization like this." He was greatly impressed with the friendliness as well as with the principles of service found in this Rotary Club.

But who ever heard of a shipload of Rotarians sailing off to Borneo or New Guinea or Sierra Leone and giving their lives to teach the principles of Rotary? Has anyone ever seen a Kiwanian missionary? With nearly a thousand Granges in some of our eastern states, there is no record of any Granger ever having been sent by any state to the mountains of Kentucky or Tennessee. And yet where can we find a thousand rural churches that have not sent a hundred or more of their choicest sons and daughters to the ends of the earth to spread the gospel message?

Of all our rural institutions, the Church is the only one whose members are concerned enough for its teachings to carry its message to the ends of the earth.

Often when a man is asked to join the Farm Bureau, he says, "What do I get out of it if I join?" But he who affiliates

with the rural church asks himself each week, "What more can I give to the church?"

THE CHURCH EXTENDS THE HORIZON

Life on the farm or in the farm kitchen is often humdrum. The dairy cows do not take a summer vacation. The hottest summer months may suggest a trip to the seashore or to the mountains, but this is canning season. Our hands get shaped to fit the plow handle and our minds to the narrow furrow. How provincial we might become! But the message on Sunday morning lifts our narrow horizon. The chores, the live stock, the crops, are left behind as if we were taking off in an airplane. We hear about the work our Church is doing in Allahabad or Santiago or Nanking or perhaps in Albuquerque or on the Mesabi Range in northern Minnesota. We get a world view. Our sympathy goes out to the rice farmer in Burma who lives on one meal a day in a five-dollar house. We hear how our representatives are lifting the burdens from the backs of the women in Syria. Our rural church enlarges our world from week to week.

It is the only institution that unites all races and colors. It is the only organization to which a farmer belongs that takes within its membership peoples from other lands.

One day a Nebraska farmer realized his life's dream by taking a trip to the Holy Land. As he entered the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, he met a man from California, then another from Oklahoma. The three men walked down the steps under the altar to see the holy birthplace. As they stood with bowed heads looking at the gold star in the floor which marks the reputed spot of Jesus' birth, quietly down the steps from the other side came a Chinese Christian to see the birthplace of the Christ of China. He stood alongside the three men he had never seen before but with whom he had much in common. Footsteps were heard again and this time it was a Japanese Christian coming to see the birthplace of his Lord. At the manger of Bethlehem and around the cross on Calvary all nations meet.

Our rural church takes us away from the routine things and gives us a world view and an interest in people of every race and color.

NEW FAITH IN THE RURAL CHURCH

We have seen that the Church is our great family institution, uniting families instead of separating them. Likewise it gives us those ideals and standards which offset the age-old tendencies and influences toward crime, vice, and sin. Because of the many Church organizations, activities, and classes, the Church trains men and women for leadership, for work not only in the Church but in all other rural organizations. Most community workers are Church workers first. Most welfare work was started by the Church and is now carried on by Church people. The Church is our one great missionary agency. The last words spoken by the Founder of the Church were, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations." To-day eight thousand missionaries are preaching this gospel in China. Six thousand more are proclaiming "the Christ of the Indian Road." Climbing the Andean slopes and penetrating the deltas of the eastern coast, and throughout South America, three thousand are at work. Winning their way into the jungles of the Congo and overcoming obstacles of rivers and desert, another six thousand are to be found in Africa. It is a great joy to belong to an organization that knows no bounds or obstacles, and transcends all barriers of language or color or race.

Let us renew our faith in the rural Church and be more loyal to its program. May we not each have the well-tilled field, the hundredfold yield, and what Norman Gale calls "The Country Faith"?

Here in the country's heart
  Where the grass is green,
Life is the same sweet life
  As it e'er hath been.

Trust in God still lives,
  And the bell at morn
Floats with a thought of God
  O'er the rising corn.

God comes down in the rain,
  And the crop grows tall—
This is the country faith,
  And the best of all.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. We build up our faith in and loyalty to the Church by looking for its accomplishments instead of its failures.

The Scripture of the Chapter. This passage, Luke 8: 4-15, teaches that the gospel like the seed sown by the Galilæan farmer, will yield encouraging results if we give it a chance.

Other Bible passages which might be used in the study of this lesson are: Matt. 7:16-20; Mark 4:30-32; John 8:12.

A LOOK INTO THE HOME COMMUNITY

1. A certain farmer was sick for several weeks during the busy season. One day his neighbors, members of a near-by church, came with teams and tractors and plowed his fields. Suppose that he had been a man who in the past had found much fault with the Church, what do you think would be his attitude toward it in the future? What does this indicate as a way for increasing Church loyalty in the community?

2. "We have a mighty poor excuse for a church," said one man dolefully. "We have the best church in this whole state," said another. Which of these two men is probably doing more to get people to belong to and to work in his church?

3. A list of a few of the successful young men and young women who are products of the local church would be a source of much satisfaction and encouragement.

4. The next time some one tells us some of the things that are wrong, let us tell him what is right with the rural church. Let the group make a list of facts they would tell him.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. One member of the group might prepare a history of the local church, enumerating some of its accomplishments.

2. Another might tell something of the missionary work of the denomination.

3. Several might give short talks on "What the Church Means to Me and My Family."

4. "The Little Brown Church" might be sung as a duet or by the entire group.

5. A special program for a Sunday evening or midweek service, planned and carried through by the members of an Adult or Young People's class, in which such subjects as those listed above are discussed, would be an encouragement to the pastor and people and also of interest to nonmembers.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"Steeples Among the Hills," by Hewitt, 260 pages. Abingdon, $1.75. An interesting account of a successful village church in Vermont.

"Churches of Distinction in Town and Country," by Brunner, 198 pages. Doran, $1.50. Stories of twenty-six successful churches.

"What Some Rural Pastors Are Doing," 22 pages. Board of Missionary Coöperation of Northern Baptist Convention, 10 cents. Accounts of various successful methods.

CHAPTER II

THE HOLY EARTH

The Gist of the Chapter. The farmer works with God in feeding the world. What we call "scientific agriculture" is simply a knowledge of God's laws in nature. God expects us to acquire a knowledge of the soil and of the seasons, of plant-breeding and of animal husbandry, of blight and drought and pests. These things that make up our agricultural learning are nothing more or less than a knowledge of how to do what ought to be done with God's earth. The better we understand the earth, its crops and its seasons, its winds and its rain, the more we shall realize that we who till the soil are coöperators with the Creator of all things. We are workers together with God.

On the other hand, if we wear out the soil, if we expose the land to erosion, if we leave our farms poorer than when we found them, we tear down the handiwork of God. If we take the fish from the streams, the birds from the air, and the timber from the hillsides, without making provision for renewal, we leave God's earth poorer than when we found it.

We read in the second chapter of Genesis of the beginning of agriculture: "And Jehovah God took the man, and put him into the garden of Eden to dress it and to keep it."

When the Children of Israel had escaped from bondage in Egypt and began to till the soil of the land which God had given to them he showed them in no uncertain terms, through the writer of the book of Deuteronomy, how he would work with them as they tilled their fields and cared for their live stock.

The Scripture

And it shall come to pass, if thou shalt hearken diligently unto the voice of Jehovah thy God, to observe to do all his commandments which I command thee this day, that Jehovah thy God will set thee on high above all the nations of the earth: and all these blessings shall come

upon thee, and overtake thee, if thou shalt hearken unto the voice of Jehovah thy God. Blessed shalt thou be in the city, and blessed shalt thou be in the field. Blessed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy ground, and the fruit of thy beasts, the increase of thy cattle, and the young of thy flock. Blessed shall be thy basket and thy kneading-trough. Blessed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and blessed shalt thou be when thou goest out.

Jehovah will cause thine enemies that rise up against thee to be smitten before thee: they shall come out against thee one way, and shall flee before thee seven ways. Jehovah will command the blessing upon thee in thy barns, and in all that thou puttest thy hand unto; and he will bless thee in the land which Jehovah thy God giveth thee. Jehovah will establish thee for a holy people unto himself, as he hath sworn unto thee; if thou shalt keep the commandments of Jehovah thy God, and walk in his ways. And all the peoples of the earth shall see that thou art called by the name of Jehovah; and they shall be afraid of thee. And Jehovah will make thee plenteous for good, in the fruit of thy body, and in the fruit of thy cattle, and in the fruit of thy ground, in the land which Jehovah sware unto thy fathers to give thee. Jehovah will open unto thee his good treasure the heavens, to give the rain of thy land in its season, and to bless all the work of thy hand.

—Deut. 28:1-12.

WORKING WITH GOD IN FEEDING THE WORLD

The Scripture for the chapter makes it clear how God works with us as we till our fields and care for our crops and live stock. Our problem is to see and feel God's presence as we go about our daily tasks on the farm.

"We never had any sunsets back here in the mountains until you came," said a woman in a mountain cabin to a home missionary. The sunsets and the beauty of those great Smoky Mountains had been there before the home missionary arrived, but there was no one to look up from the isolated settlements and narrow lives to point out their beauty.

Likewise some farmers may hear only the "chug, chug" of tractors in their tireless trips across the field, while others may see themselves working together with God to feed a hungry world. Harvest time may be to some simply a time of longer hours and harder work. Others may see God's handiwork in the golden grain and feel that they are honored by working with God in his continual process of creation.

Once after Liberty Hyde Bailey had delivered a lecture on

the subject "The Holy Earth" he received an appreciative letter from a farmer, who, although he was without education and had lived only as he said "in the woods," looked upon his occupation in a way that few farmers see it. The letter which Dean Bailey received reads as follows: [1]

As you say, too many people confound farming with that sordid, selfish, money-getting game called "business," whereas the farmer's position is administrative, being in a way that of a dispenser of the mysteries of God, for they are mysteries. Every apple is a mystery, and every ear of corn is a mystery, and every potato is a mystery, and every pound of butter is a mystery, and when a farmer is not able to understand these things he is out of place.

The farmer uses the soil and the rains and the snows and the frosts and the winds and the sun; these are also the implements of the Almighty, the only tools he uses. While you were talking the other day, it brought to mind the recollections of an account I once read of an occurrence which took place in the vicinity of Karlsruhe, in Germany, about thirty years ago, and I want to tell you about it. An old man and his two sons who were laborers on a large farm there went out one morning to mow peas with scythes, as was the method in use at that time, and soon after they began to work they noticed a large, active man coming along a pathway which bordered the field on one side. When he came to where they were, he spoke to them, very pleasantly, and asked them some questions about their work; then taking the scythe from the hands of the older man he mowed some with it and finally returned it and went his way. After a time when the owner came out to oversee the work the laborers told him of the occurrence, and asked him if he could tell who the stranger might be. He told them that he was Prince Bismarck, Chancellor of the empire, who was staying at his country home in Karlsruhe, and was out for his morning walk. They were astonished, and the old man was filled with a great pride. He felt himself elevated above his fellows, and he wouldn't have sold his scythe for half the money in Germany, and his descendants to this day boast of the fact that their father and Bismarck mowed with the same scythe. Now if it was sufficient to stimulate the pride of this old laborer, if it was sufficient to convert that old rusty scythe into a priceless heirloom to be treasured up and transmitted from father to son, if it was sufficient for all these things that he had once held a momentary, unimportant association with the man of "blood and iron," how much more inconceivably and immeasurably high and exalted is the station of the farmer, who is, in a measure, a fellow craftsman of the God of nature, of the great First Cause of all things, and people don't know it.

Jesus continually called our attention to the presence of the heavenly Father in the growing crops. He was concerned with even the smallest of God's creatures.

[1] From "The Holy Earth," by L. H. Bailey. Used by permission.

"Are not five sparrows sold for two pence?" he remarked one day, "and not one of them is forgotten in the sight of God."

He told of God's care for the lilies. "Consider the lilies, how they grow," he said, and added, "God doth so clothe the grass in the field."

His illustrations are redolent of farm life. "I am the good shepherd," he often said. Another time he used the vineyard from which to draw his lessons. "I am the true vine," he has told us, "and my Father is the husbandman."

Our problem is to see the land about us as sacred soil, as "the holy earth," and to feel God's presence with us as we go about our daily tasks. We would see the heavenly Father as Jesus saw him in every field and flower and hillside.

THE EXPLOITER

He who fails to see the hand of God in nature turns to exploit. He robs the soil of its fertility and steals from the generations that are to live from it later. His tenant, if he has one, is likewise a means to his selfish end, a chattel to yield him profit, rather than a coworker. Farming ceases to be a mode of life for him, and becomes simply a means of getting a living.

The waving fields and the golden harvest cease to be for him the handiwork of God and he drives himself to build more barns and fill them.

When an individual or a community exploits the resources God has provided, idealism sinks and all become poorer in the things that enrich community life. This losing sight of God by the exploitation of natural resources is well illustrated by a certain community, which for convenience may be called "Sharp Valley."

For half a century the people of Sharp Valley cut the lumber from the surrounding hillsides but planted no trees in return. Theirs was a selfish existence, a life of exploitation. The beauty of the mountain scenery attracted tourists, who were likewise exploited. Timber and tourists were used simply for gain, without regard to what was given in return.

"I charged a summer resident twenty-five dollars for pulling

his automobile out of the ditch," boasted one of the natives, who admitted that the job was worth only five dollars.

One evening a group of the men of Sharp Valley were discussing a fence that was being built for one of the summer residents. A cheaper and more poorly woven wire was put on the back of the rich man's farm than was put on the front, but the price charged was for the better wire all around the place.

Happy is the farmer who sees about him the holy earth and sees himself as a coworker with God.

"He'll never know the difference," the men all agreed and praised the "sharp bargain."

But this acquisitive life has left its marks on the moral and religious life of the village. The church finds it difficult to get men to give to it a share of their time. The principle of the Church is unselfish giving, not selfish getting, and consequently these men do not feel at home in the church.

Three moral sore spots in the village are an indication of the ideals of the village. The "Children's Agent" has cared for a number of illegitimate children from Sharp Valley.

Only ten per cent of the high-school pupils passed their final examinations recently. The whole village sags, because the people live a selfish, acquisitive life.

The same principle is found everywhere. Rural church life is at its lowest ebb in those sections of Illinois or Iowa, Alabama or New Jersey, where tenantry is highest. The owner of the farm moves to town and undertakes to live by the labors of his tenant. The tenant expects to move to another farm soon, so gives little heed to putting fertilizer back into the soil or to keeping the fences in repair. Each blames the other, but each tries to get ahead of the other. The land suffers, likewise the school and the church. Ideals are lower wherever people are not engaged in creative work. Happy is the farmer who sees about him the holy earth and feels himself a coworker with God.

THE CHURCH'S CONTRIBUTION TO AGRICULTURE

The farmer who looks upon scientific agriculture as obeying the laws of God in nature becomes a better farmer. He who recognizes the land as the holy earth, and passes it on to future generations better than he found it instead of depleted, is helping to build a better agriculture. The rural church that is "preaching the worth of the native earth" is making of its members husbandmen instead of peasants and thus is building a better rural America. How sordid would farm life be without the contribution which the Church is making to a better agriculture! Shall we not give to the rural church a new loyalty and a deeper devotion?

The Church is similarly making its contribution to agriculture in less favored sections of the world. Agricultural missionaries are now being sent out by the churches to the most handicapped peoples.

A missionary in Burma recently came home on his furlough and shocked some of his audiences by talking about "a Christian pig" and "a Christian hen." He showed pictures of himself with a Poland China pig under one arm and a Barred Rock hen under the other. These two animals he carried with him while making his missionary trips among the Burmese villages.

"I hold up the pig," said he, "and show the farm people

of Burma that it is twice the size of their native pigs. I tell them this hen will lay three hundred eggs a year instead of sixty, the number their hens lay, and then I talk to them about pure-bred animals; about pure rice for seed; about corn that will grow fifty bushels to an acre instead of their fifteen-bushel variety. I tell them about cows that will give milk and keep children alive; about plows that are better than their wooden plows. I tell them how to fight insects and pests, disease and sin. I show them how immortal human souls are being stunted and blighted in Burma because of the present agricultural conditions." This missionary is improving all phases of rural life in his mission field. The Church that sends him to Burma is certainly making its contribution to world agriculture.

Another agricultural missionary, home from India, said that one third of the people of that huge nation go to bed hungry every night. With his improved methods of agriculture this representative of the Church is changing famine into plenty, hunger into happiness, superstition into learning, and sin into salvation. Such men as this, representatives of the Christian Church, are showing us how the cultivation of the soil affects the culture of the soul.

A pastor in a certain Chinese village came to the agricultural college at Nanking one day and asked for help. The rice crop in his parish had failed. The missionary agriculturist at Nanking investigated conditions in the pastor's village and advised the people to change from rice to silk. He taught them how to plant and care for mulberry trees with which to feed the silkworms. He showed them how to harvest and market the silk cocoons. He helped them to organize a co-operative credit association in order to finance this venture. This village which had had a long history of crop failures and poverty changed to one of diversified farming with a regular income. The church and the school prospered. People there saw a new relationship between crops and Christians. What a new loyalty we should give to our Church as we see the contribution it is making to farm folks throughout the world!

There is a church in Africa that requires every man in its membership to have a garden of his own. "If any provideth not for his own," said Paul in his first letter to Timothy,

"and specially his own household, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an unbeliever." This church is rendering most practical service to its African community.

A certain rural church in an Iowa community inspired one of its farm lads to go to Rhodesia, in South Africa, after he had completed his agricultural course at Ames. Among other interesting experiences he had in building a better rural life in that section, he tells of the introduction of the first plow into his mission field. "The native farmer who was to use it had put it together wrong in six different places," said the missionary when he went over to watch its first trial. "He finally got it together and the African hitched his oxen to it and it started to plow to the amazement of all.

"Among those watching the new plow were the three wives of the African farmer. Two of them had babies strapped on their backs. They had been this African's plow heretofore, and they seemed most pleased of all the watchers. They saw that the new plow relieved them of many weary hours of labor with a pick and a hoe.

"In time the same African sold two of his wives. He didn't need them, now that he had the plow. They were only slaves anyhow, which he had bought as he bought the plow. He kept the wife he cared for and began to build a real home."

"When I came home on my first furlough we had nine plows in Old Umtali. I knew that meant nine happy homes. When I started on this, my second furlough," said the agricultural missionary, "there were two thousand six hundred plows in my section of Africa."

Let us tell the next person who complains about the Church's being impractical of this agricultural missionary in Africa. Let us tell of the many missionaries sent out by the Church who are preventing famine and feeding starving people in backward countries.

As we go about our daily work of plowing and harvesting may we not get a new inspiration and enthusiasm through the consciousness that we are working with God in feeding the world?

"We plow the fields, and scatter
The good seed on the land,
But it is fed and watered
By God's almighty hand;

He sends the snow in winter,
The warmth to swell the grain,
The breezes and the sunshine,
And soft refreshing rain.

. . . . . .

"We thank thee, then, O Father,
For all things bright and good,
The seedtime and the harvest,
Our life, our health, our food:
No gifts have we to offer,
For all thy love imparts,
But that which thou desirest,
Our humble, thankful hearts."

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. We are workers together with God as we till the soil and help him in creating the world's food supply. The land which we till is not something to be exploited or depleted. It is the holy earth. Scientific agriculture is simply obedience to God's laws. We share his laws and his tools as we go about our daily tasks.

The Scripture of the Chapter. In these verses (Deut. 28:1-12) as well as throughout the entire book of Deuteronomy, God is telling his people that if they obey his laws he will bless their fields and herds, their houses and granaries. Read also Psalm 19.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Which do you think is a better place to raise a family, on the farm, or in the city? Give the reasons in full.
2. A man who owned a farm free of debt once said that he had a moral right to do with it as he pleased, even to wear out the soil, to let it grow up to weeds, or to destroy the forests. Do you think he was right? Why?
3. Jesus said the heavenly Father has concern for the sparrows, and that he clothes the lilies of the field with beauty. Do you think that this is merely figurative language? What did Jesus mean to teach?
4. Does the exploiting of farms, forests, tenants, neighbors, employees, or employers have any effect upon the moral fiber or religious life of a person or of a community? (See Sharp Valley as an illustration.)
5. Read over the letter which Dean Bailey received and see if you, or other farmers whom you know, realize, as the writer of this letter does, the close relationship between God, the Creator, and the man who tills the soil. This suggests to us something to think about during the week while we are busy on our farms.

SOMETHING TO DO

Copy the following poem on "The Country Church" and take it with you while at work during the week. It is *your* church talking to you. Read it and re-read it while plowing or harvesting. As you look each

day at the church spire pointing to the skies, remember that its "footstone lies in commonplace work of the day," chores, plowing, drilling, and care of home and children. As the meaning of this poem creeps into your soul, farm life will be exalted and your church will mean more to you than it ever has meant before.

THE COUNTRY CHURCH

By L. H. Bailey

I stand in the fields,
Where the wide earth yields
  Her bounties of fruit and grain;
Where the furrows turn
Till the plowshares burn
  As they come 'round and 'round again;
Where the workers pray
With their tools all day
  In sunshine and shadow and rain.

And I bid them tell
Of the crops they sell
  And speak of the work they have done;
I speed every man
In his hope and plan
  And follow his day with the sun;
And grasses and trees,
The birds and the bees
  I know and I feel ev'ry one.

And out of it all
As the seasons fall
  I build my great temple alway;
I point to the skies,
But my footstone lies
  In commonplace work of the day;
For I preach the worth
Of the native earth—
  To love and to work is to pray.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"Wind and Weather," by Bailey, 216 pages. Macmillan, $1.50. Poems that tell how nature contributes to our spiritual and æsthetic life.

"Poems of Country Life," by Bryan, 349 pages. Macmillan, $2.25. A collection of rural poems.

"Green Bush," by Frederick, 304 pages. Knopf, $2.50. The story of one who discovered the joys of cultivating the soil.

"Hunger Fighters," by De Kruif, 377 pages. Harcourt, $3.00. Stories of people who made great "discoveries in food."

"The Holy Earth," by Bailey, 171 pages. Macmillan, $1.50. It was from this book that the letter in the beginning of this chapter was taken.

CHAPTER III

OUR NEIGHBORS

The Gist of the Chapter. Farmers exchange work, borrow one another's machinery, visit back and forth, use the same telephone line, and have many intimate contacts. Some farmers are naturally more progressive than others and desire community improvements. Others oppose any change. Therefore neighborhood conflicts are apt to arise in the countryside.

Our religion should determine our attitude towards our neighbors on Monday just as much as on Sunday it affects our attitude towards God. Jesus said that the greatest Commandments are to love God and to love our neighbors. In this chapter we are to consider our attitude towards our neighbors.

As we read again the parable of the Good Samaritan, let us look to see its lesson for us on the subject of neighborliness. We may be surprised to find that our attitude towards our neighbor is given the same importance as our love for God.

The two men in this parable whom Jesus condemned were supposedly religious men but did not meet his requirements in neighborliness. Whatever other handicaps the Samaritan may have had, he measured up to Jesus' standard as a good neighbor. This one neighborly act of this one man in this one parable has for two thousand years changed the attitude of the world towards the race of people who lived in the mountains between Jerusalem and Nazareth, and has taught the lesson of neighborliness to all of us.

The Scripture

And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and made trial of him, saying, Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? And he said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy

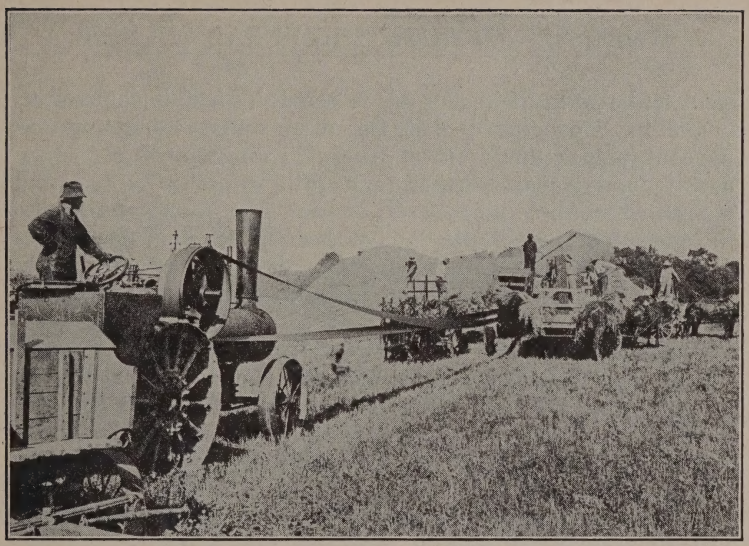
neighbor as thyself. And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. But he, desiring to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbor? Jesus made answer and said, A certain man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho; and he fell among robbers, who both stripped him and beat him, and departed, leaving him half dead. And by chance a certain priest was going down that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. And in like manner a Levite also, when he came to the place, and saw him, passed by on the other side. But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he was moved with compassion, and came to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring on them oil and wine; and he set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. And on the morrow he took out two shillings, and gave them to the host, and said, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, I, when I come back again, will repay thee. Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him that fell among the robbers? And he said, He that showed mercy on him. And Jesus said unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.

—Luke 10:25-37.

THE CHURCH PRODUCES NEIGHBORLINESS

A son and three daughters were recently called home to the bedside of their father in California. Three of the children journeyed from cities in Colorado, Texas, and Washington, and one came from a small Oklahoma village. This proved to be the father's last illness. It was no accident that letters of sympathy poured in with each mail for the daughter who came from the small rural church, while the children from the larger cities received few neighborly remembrances. Rural churches produce neighborliness.

A farmer in New York State recently met with an accident while chopping wood. On the following Sunday afternoon the neighbors' automobiles began to arrive in the man's yard. Some of the people went into the house while others just stood around on the outside. They seemed to want to be counted upon as good neighbors, even though there was nothing they could do. By the middle of the afternoon the yard was full of cars. The place looked as though a wedding or a funeral or perhaps an auction sale were being held. As the crowds passed through the room where their neighbor with the cut foot lay, they joked with him about his keeping in practice in chopping wood, then added a word of cheer and



Farmers exchange work, borrow one another's machinery, visit back and forth, use the same telephone line, and have many intimate contacts. The church helps to provide the spirit of neighborliness and good will.

Rural churches with social halls make the spirit of neighborliness contagious.

went on home to their chores. A passer-by in this community might have concluded that this was some strange church pageant, staged at this farm home. The explanation is that a mile and a half distant is a little white-spired country church where these neighbors worship. For seventy-five years the gospel of neighborliness has been proclaimed from this plain pulpit. The Good Samaritan described in the lesson above would feel perfectly at home in many rural churches such as this.

"Just dropped in to see how you were," is a familiar greeting in the countryside. Also, neighborliness is not confined to greetings. The field of the sick man is plowed; the children of the sick tenant are clothed; the wheat of the widow is harvested; and the wood is chopped for the old woman's winter fire.

Those who describe with clever sarcasm our "Main Street" villages were never sick in one. He who enumerates glibly the shortcomings of the rural church would turn quickly to the members of these small churches if he were in trouble. Neighborliness is the principal by-product of rural religion.

RURAL CHURCHES FOSTER SOCIAL LIFE

As a rule, it is better to have social life church-centered. The church which conducts a community social shows this same spirit of neighborliness on a larger scale.

The objection may be raised to a church social that "everybody does not belong to that church." Of course no organization has "everybody" in the community in its membership. Age-group socials are better than community socials, and the Church is the only institution that is organized by age groups.

Social life, with its great emphasis on spontaneous activity, needs the directing influence of the church. The description of a certain community that tried church-centered social life and then social life without the supervision of the church will illustrate the helpful influence which the church may exert on community social life.

In many ways this parish was ahead of the average open-country community. The pastor lived in the manse next to the Martin Church and shared the economic problems and social life of his farmer folk. A men's club of sixty or more

members kept the church tied up to the everyday life of its homes and farms by sponsoring each year a week's extension school in agriculture. At this school potatoes were graded, hens judged, alfalfa studied, and farm prices discussed. Such meetings were always held in the social room at the rear of the church edifice. The men's club installed a lighting plant on the church property and in other ways kept the white church and the near-by manse up-to-date.

The young people in this open-country community also found the church the center for their social life. Pageants and plays were given, suppers served, and the usual social life provided.

But a change came about in this quiet country community. Some of the people wanted more freedom in their social life than the church had given them. They purposed to build a separate social hall "of their own," a meeting place where they could "do as they pleased."

The elders advised against such a separation of the church and the social life, and said that if a social hall was needed, they would build it on the church property and care for it. But by this time conflicts had arisen. The young people said that the old folks were too old-fashioned. The adults said that the young were wild and pleasure-bent. The nonchurched said that the members were narrow, and the pastor and some of his people felt it necessary to call attention to the sins of the sinners.

The feeling became more bitter. The gap widened. The community was divided and the hall was built as a separate "worldly institution." Since that year, Martin has been a different place. Ministers have come and gone; their terms of service have been shorter. The old extension school that had so much to do with dignifying and improving the agricultural life of Martin farmers has given place to a self-centered social program with its commercial features. Worse than this, the friendliness that once made Martin one big family seems to have gone forever.

The misunderstanding between age and youth is not usually one of higher or lower standards, but simply a question of years. What we sometimes call religion is often nothing but rheumatism. This conflict between adults and youth calls for patience on the part of both. "Love suffereth long, and

is kind." Our religion should help us in cases of community conflict to center our attentions on principles instead of on personalities.

Martin community illustrates the great value of the church in providing social life. This church had engendered neighborliness for years, and within its walls members and non-members had often congregated for their good times. But outside influences came in. When the social life ceased to be church-centered it met with many obstacles. The new hall had to be paid for; consequently the socials held in it had to be commercialized. The church had provided social life for all ages, but the hall served its "members" only. The limitations which the church placed on its socials were found after all to be only in the interests of those who attended.

THE SPIRIT OF COÖPERATION

The lack of the spirit of neighborliness is the cause of many of our economic and social ills. We hear a great deal about "farm relief." All agree that the farmers should receive a larger share of the nation's income. Coöperative marketing is suggested as one of the ways of increasing the share of the consumer's dollar that should go to the farmer.

About 2,000,000 farmers are now organized into 12,000 co-operative marketing associations. In one year they sold $2,000,000,000 worth of farm products and purchased farm supplies to the value of nearly $500,000,000. One third of them are members of farmers' elevator associations. Nearly 150,000 farmers gin or market their cotton coöperatively. About 50,000 are selling their poultry products jointly. These are the men with the neighborly attitude, men who have been trained in social experience, men who coöperate.

This number of 2,000,000 might be changed to 6,000,000 if the 4,000,000 who do not now belong could catch more of the spirit of coöperation and neighborliness.

"An organizer for a coöperative society goes into a community," is the way one farmer began to explain the lack of the coöperative spirit. "This representative tells all about the coöperative association that is being formed and asks the farmers to join. Some join promptly and others want a little more time to think it over. While they are waiting and de-

ciding whether or not they will join, those who have joined accuse the nonpoolers of being slow, noncoöperative, selfish, interested in their own affairs only, and not desirous of helping the others. Such criticism does not help the attitude of the nonpoolers and of course their replies are just as bitter." Thus almost every farm community in the United States is divided from an economic standpoint, and often socially as well, into the poolers and the nonpoolers.

And we divide not only into poolers and nonpoolers, but into other groups. We have the owners and the tenants, the old residents and the newcomers, the dancers and the non-dancers, those who favor the consolidation of schools and likewise of churches, and those who want to keep the little red schoolhouse and the little sectarian church. This lack of coöperation helps to keep farm incomes low and community life divided. From the days when the herdsmen of Abraham and those of Lot quarreled over a line fence until the present day, farm people have made their conditions harder through lack of coöperation.

An increasing number of communities, however, are catching the spirit of coöperation. Farmers in increasing numbers are putting into practice the spirit of neighborliness and are living the coöperative life. Rural churches are making great contributions to modern rural life by teaching the spirit of coöperation and neighborliness.

In the city, people usually leave the task of community housekeeping to the city officials. Many city people take little interest in the administration of schools or streets or health. But in the country, neighbors work together. We not only exchange work in threshing and silo-filling time, but we share the responsibility of managing our community affairs, our school, our Grange, our social life. The rural church has a great opportunity to provide a feeling of friendliness and neighborliness as we discuss these things, instead of a spirit of criticism. Our church gives us an unselfish attitude and a thoughtfulness for our neighbor and a respect for his views. Such an attitude is what we might call "organized neighborliness."

Let us study two communities to see which we resemble the more. Trumansville residents awakened one morning to find

their schoolhouse a heap of smoking ashes. The old building was antiquated; a new structure had been needed for some time. Besides, the time had come, at least in the opinion of some, to consolidate the village school and the surrounding country districts. Also, the old site was small with no playground facilities. The unexpected fire threw all of the ques-

Four city churches in one county, their membership made up largely of those who have moved in from the country, have procured directors of religious education. These directors are putting on a modern program for the 5,000 rural children of the county. This program includes the training of local leaders, the establishment of week-day religious education in the rural schools, and the equipment of Sunday School rooms.

tions into a debate. Before the ashes had cooled, the debate was getting hot.

"The old site was the best," said some, "because it was centrally located."

"No, it wasn't the best. Trumansville must be up-to-date. Let's build a modern schoolhouse on a site sufficient for play-

grounds, with a baseball diamond, a football field, a girl's playground, provision for all ages." So the debate continued.

"It looks to me as though Trumansville needs a new schoolhouse and they simply want to make us farmers help them to build it. That's all I see in this idea of the consolidation of schools." Thus the patrons of the country districts argued.

Votes were taken on the new school proposition and it lost. The School Board was threatened with legal action from both sides. The rural people boycotted some of the merchants. Meanwhile the school children were housed in makeshift buildings. After three unhappy years a centralized district was finally formed and a modern schoolhouse built. But during the time of conflict there was manifest little of the spirit of neighborliness. The five churches in the village of Trumansville had not prepared the people for such a time of stress and strain.

About the time the fire took away the Trumansville schoolhouse, a similar village in the same state had an idea: it needed a new school building. These neighbors foresaw the decreasing influence of American villages as little industries, one after another, were moving into the city. With the improvement of the roads, the increase in the number of automobiles, and the decrease in attendance at the country schools, they saw the coming of a centralized school, even to Waterburg. They concluded that the hope of the village lay in its coöperation with the surrounding countryside. They planned an educational campaign in neighborliness. For three years they brought in speakers to tell about modern schools elsewhere.

"A gymnasium for Waterburg? Yes, when we get a new schoolhouse," they said. "Classes in agriculture; in home economics? Hot lunches at school? A band; an orchestra? Yes, a place for them will be provided in the new centralized plant." And so, for three years, the idea kept growing in the minds of all. Finally, when the time came to vote, there was no opposition to this plan. All worked together with joy and enthusiasm for the new school.

What was the fundamental difference between the Trumansville and the Waterburg situations? In one, everyone was angry with his neighbor; in the other, the neighbors worked together enthusiastically for a common cause. One community

dealt in personalities, the other in principles. One carried on a constant debate, the other an educational campaign. Perhaps many of our neighborhood conflicts would be avoided if we were patient, and if we educated our church, our neighbors, our community, whatever our organization is, in the program we thought necessary. Coöperative effort might thus take the place of community conflicts. Getting along with our neighbors does not mean simply "holding our tongues," but rather using them in a careful campaign of education. Our rural church is bringing to our country communities this spirit of "organized neighborliness" which we greatly need.

"How can I help to make this a better community?" is a question we need to ask ourselves. "What family needs my help? What cause can I assist?" The way we answer such questions is proof of our neighborliness.

"Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor unto him?"

"He that showed mercy on him."

"Go, and do thou likewise."

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. In this lesson we shall need to examine our own attitude towards our neighbors. Do we have time to "drop in and pay a visit," or are we too much concerned with our own affairs? Are we too busy to call up and inquire about the sick, or can people always count on us to think of these things? Do we take time off to help people in need? If we do this, we are doing a valuable work in the world as well as in our own community.

The Scripture of the Chapter. Members of the class will be interested in telling of various neighborly acts, similar to that of the Good Samaritan, which they have observed during the past ten years.

SOMETHING TO DO

Usually, in every community, there is some family of newcomers who, because of sickness, unemployment, or crop failure, are in need of help. The children may need clothes; the father may need a chance to work. A class, in helping such a family, has a good opportunity to put into practice the teaching of this lesson.

Some time in a church or Grange program, or perhaps in this class, it would be well to debate the subject, "Resolved, That Our Community Is More Neighborly than Formerly." This would help to bring out our present attitude towards our neighbors.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

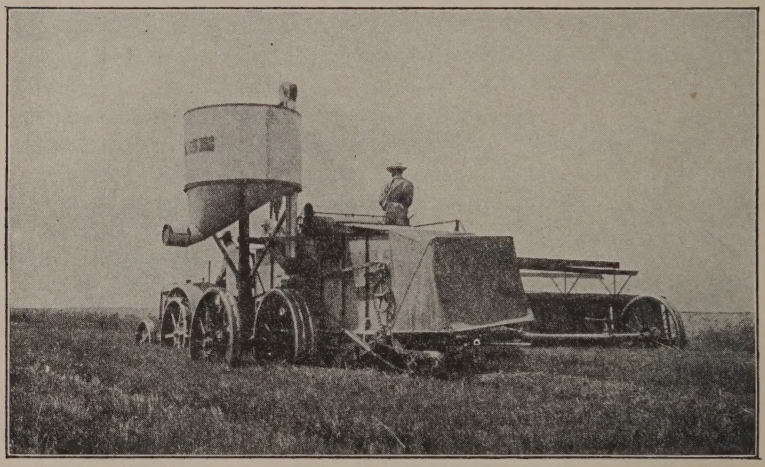
"The Story of John Frederick Oberlin," by Beard, 196 pages. Pilgrim Press, $1.25. The life of a great rural pastor who gave his life in neighborly service to a community old in suffering and poverty in the Vosges Mountains.

"Adventures of David Grayson," by Baker, 1040 pages. Doubleday, Doran, $2.50. Essays which show the value of rural neighbors.

CHAPTER IV

THE OTHER CHURCH

The Gist of the Chapter. We are expecting more of the church each day. Instead of having only "preaching services," we are now putting greater emphasis on teaching children and youth. Instead of simply getting people out of the community into the church, we are trying to get the church out into the



Because of improved machinery and unfavorable economic conditions there is a net decrease of a half million people in our rural population each year. The total membership of 1,500 country churches moves to town annually. This calls for the consolidation of rural churches and schools.

community. We call this "community service." We now believe in church-centered recreation. We want our church to contribute to the health and economic life of the entire community. Likewise we want to pay our minister a living wage, a salary that will increase his efficiency from year to year.

On the other hand, our rural church constituency is decreasing each year. The annual decrease of our rural population is 500,000 people. One fourth of these are Church members, which means that the total membership of 1,500 country churches moves out every year and leaves empty church buildings behind. This seems too discouraging.

It should be said by way of explanation that these people who move into the city from the rural parishes soon become the life of many city churches. It should also be explained that they do not all come from the 1,500 rural parishes. One family moves out of one parish; the Sunday School superintendent leaves the next church; some active young people from another country community decide to cast in their lot with the city. So all our rural churches are drained of their workers from year to year.

This means that, as our rural church constituencies decrease, we must unite our forces. We want our churches to enlarge their programs of service. They must therefore enlarge their membership. They will need more people, larger parishes, and more financial support. But how are we going to unite our small competitive rural churches? From the beginning of the Christian Church as described in the book of The Acts until to-day, we have been kept apart by nonessentials. But the Holy Spirit then worked upon people's hearts to create unity. He is working still to help us to put aside these nonessentials that separate us and to unite us in Christian brotherhood. Man-made labels may not indicate differences which God recognizes.

The Scripture

Now on the morrow, as they were on their journey, and drew nigh unto the city, Peter went up upon the housetop to pray, about the sixth hour: and he became hungry, and desired to eat: but while they made ready, he fell into a trance; and he beholdeth the heaven opened, and a certain vessel descending, as it were a great sheet, let down by four corners upon the earth: wherein were all manner of fourfooted beasts and creeping things of the earth and birds of the heaven. And there came a voice to him, Rise, Peter; kill and eat. But Peter said, Not so, Lord; for I have never eaten anything that is common and unclean. And a voice came unto him again the second time, What God hath cleansed, make not thou common. And this was done thrice: and straightway the vessel was received up into heaven.

Now while Peter was much perplexed in himself what the vision which he had seen might mean, behold, the men that were sent by Cornelius, having made inquiry for Simon's house, stood before the gate, and called and asked whether Simon, who was surnamed Peter, were lodging there. And while Peter thought on the vision, the Spirit said unto him, Behold, three men seek thee. But arise, and get thee down, and go with them, nothing doubting: for I have sent them. And Peter went down to the men, and said, Behold, I am he whom ye seek: what is the cause wherefore ye are come? And they said, Cornelius a centurion, a righteous man and one that feareth God, and well reported of by all the nation of the Jews, was warned of God by a holy angel to send for thee into his house, and to hear words from thee. So he called them in and lodged them. . . .

And Peter opened his mouth, and said,

Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: but in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is acceptable to him.

—*Acts 10:9-23, 34, 35.*

A COMMUNITY THAT UNITED THE CHURCHES

A few miles back from Lake Erie in western New York State is a village of nine hundred people that has demonstrated one method of pulling itself together and providing adequate religious life for its boys and girls.

The first settler came to Sherman, New York, in 1823. For a hundred years four Protestant churches divided about equally the population of the little rural village. Each successive congregation that built a church in Sherman got a great thrill, no doubt, as they saw the framework of the new building rise. As they listened to the beat of the hammers, however, they little realized what a problem they were creating for later generations.

The builders of new churches in America have been lauded, but those who come after them and try to unite these congregations often have a stony road to travel.

For about seventy years Sherman was a church-centered community. There was little else to attract people. During the last thirty years, however, new interests have arisen: waterworks, 1896; telephones, 1898; electric lights, 1898; a library, 1906; and a park, 1920. Automobiles, state roads, moving pictures, and a high school have been even greater forces in weakening the central influence of the four churches. The

Grange has its meetings; likewise the lodges, the Board of Trade, the Minerva Literary Club, the Scouts, and the Lecture Course. Each demanded leaders and each shared with the churches the time which people had to give to attending meetings.

Whether or not these literary and social organizations should be looked upon as competitors of the churches, or simply as offsprings of the Church created for the purpose of carrying out its teachings, does not matter. Every community in America has developed in much the same way. Sherman's churches became weaker and weaker. It cost more to get good ministers than formerly. Many of the pastors were trained in a time when preaching was the minister's chief asset. Now a program of religious education and a social program are demanded. High-school and college graduates demand a minister that requires the pooling of the financial resources of small congregations. The ministers who came to Sherman had short pastorates and often two of the four pulpits were empty.

In the meantime forces had been at work to bring the churches together. The fire company, the village band, the Scouts, the high school, the clubs and lodges had no denominational lines. These many non-Church agencies are exerting an increasing influence in bringing us into a coöperative state of mind. The cheese factory, the milk condensary, the Dairymen's League, the Farm and Home Bureaus, and the Board of Trade have taught the farmers and village people the value of coöperation.

In 1918, while two of the churches in Sherman were without pastors, each of the four congregations selected a committee to work out a joint relationship. They decided that they wanted to put the emphasis of their united churches upon a higher type of service to their local community, so they selected as a name, "The Sherman Community Church." Some doctrinal questions kept the Baptist congregation out, but in 1919 the other churches, including the Presbyterian, turned their properties over to the new incorporation and began their interesting experiment. The Presbyterian manse was remodeled for the new minister and the other parsonages sold. The Methodist church became the place of worship for the united congregation and the Presbyterian building was made into a

most serviceable Community House. Another church was sold to the Grange.

Since the merging of these congregations the membership has had a steady growth, as has also the yearly budget. Money has been saved. Three buildings are kept in repair now instead of six. One minister is now paid an adequate salary where, before, three were poorly paid. The high-school pupils can get their religious education together as well as their secular training. Schoolmates and playmates are not separated on Sunday while being taught the lessons of brotherhood and unselfish service in the Sunday School.

With an adequate ministry and church plant, new types of service are given now that were impossible before, such as a Vacation Church School, a church kindergarten, a social and recreational program, and an extension program to the surrounding countryside.

"When we came here," said the pastor of the Community Church, "we had a hard time to find any farmers in the country who were interested in the church. They looked upon the four churches as village institutions."

"What is the church now doing for the farmers that it did not do before?" he was asked.

"We have what we call our 'Automobile Church Club' of a hundred automobile owners. We use about ten of these cars on an average Sunday to bring the children in from some distant farm homes where the parents are not yet interested.

"Then in the summer we have what we call our 'Twilight Lawn Services' in the country. The whole congregation goes out to some farm home every Sunday evening. I usually spend the previous week calling in that neighborhood, and of course the farm people themselves invite their neighbors. The next Sunday night we go to another neighborhood. The farmers now feel that this is their church."

"Do the three denominations have any trouble in getting along together?" he was next asked.

"We don't have so much trouble now that we are together and really know one another as we did before. Our uniting made it possible for members of other denominations to join us. Instead of having three denominations represented in our membership we now have twelve. We are really the Sherman Community Church."

After studying the progress of this community church one cannot but commend the way the laymen of Sherman have minimized their differences in creed and, instead, have laid greater emphasis on Christian service to their community. In securing greater administrative efficiency to provide this community service they were unanimous in their agreement that the three churches should work together as one large unit instead of as three small organizations.

In a study of their plan, however, one cannot help wishing that they had the enthusiasm and the loyalty which linking up with one of the great denominations would bring. The missionary secretaries, the returned missionaries, the denominational institutes, the visits of supervisory Church officials, are all sources of inspiration and help. We cannot but hope that our denominational leaders will soon find a way to help small competitive churches in overchurched communities to become "community churches," as the churches in Sherman and over a thousand other communities have done in the last decade. Equally important in such a united movement is an arrangement whereby these community churches may be linked up with one of our great denominations so as to receive the inspiration and help of the denominational headquarters.

A VILLAGE THAT UNITED ITS ORGANIZATIONS

Resting like a jewel on the border of Lake Ontario is the neighborly little village of Fair Haven, a small place with big ideas. It is blazing a trail for other villages to follow.

This village, like others in northwestern New York, is surrounded by fruit growers and dairymen. Like other trade centers in the county, it has three hotels, three garages, a young bank, and several stores. It has a schoolhouse, as old or older than those of most towns in the East. The Lehigh Valley Railroad, running north through Ithaca and Auburn with its terminal here, suffers from the competition of the many bus lines, as is the case everywhere else. Then just what is the "big idea" of Fair Haven?

Most villages have too many of everything—too many clubs, too many lodges, too many churches, and too many meetings. They have a lot of good fractions, but no common denominator. Instead of one good civic organization with enough

members and money to accomplish something, their organizations are so small that the members must spend all their energy on getting out a crowd for the next meeting. "Tell us how to get people to attend our meetings," they say. They are all the time "getting up something" to "get members," but seldom accomplish anything worth while.

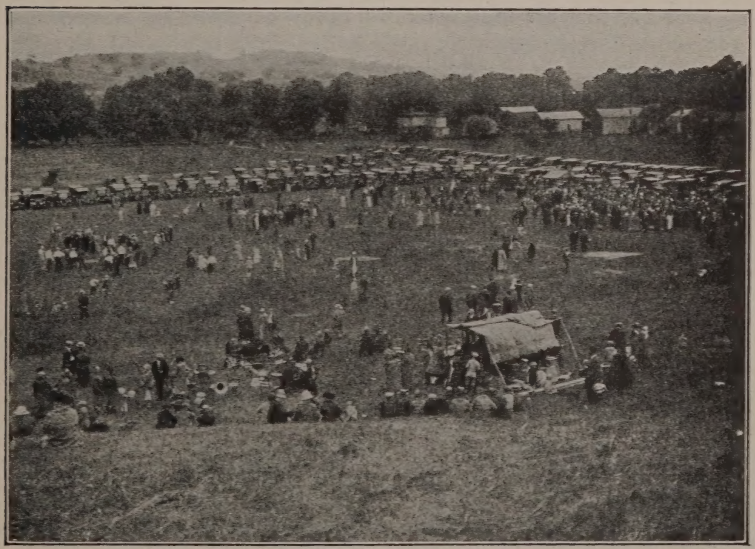
Whether or not most villages have too many churches is a question for the members of those churches to decide. But if somebody should ask such a question in public his audience would wonder where he had been living all these years. The Institute of Social and Religious Research, which has recently made a survey of church conditions in 140 agricultural villages distributed throughout the United States, discovered that the average number of churches per village is 5.6. Not a single one of the 140 villages studied has only one church. In 60 of these villages there are 7 or more churches apiece, and 2 have as many as 15 each. These 140 villages range in population from 250 to 2,500 people.

But Fair Haven is different. The civic-minded citizens of the place are all united in one organization. This happens to be the Parent-Teacher Association. It might as well have been a civic club, a Home Bureau, or a literary society. Regardless of its name, all join in the program, men as well as women.

This organization is at present equipping the school with play equipment. The group is also sponsoring a Camp Fire Girls organization. It might as well have been Girl Scouts or a Four-H Club. One such organization in a place is needed, but no more.

Fair Haven's latest venture in consolidation is the uniting of its two churches. For years the two organizations divided about equally the religious life of the community. One church may have boasted of more members, but the other would have replied that their constituency was "more influential." Neither church alone could support a good minister. Preaching kept becoming more expensive and the church income kept falling off. Just as a river will not rise above its source, so church life will not rise very high with a poorly paid and poorly trained ministry. To get better leadership they decided to pool their resources and employ one pastor for the two congregations.

Farmers unite in their Farm Bureau, their Grange, and their marketing organizations. There is also a general demand among them for the uniting of competitive churches.



With improved transportation facilities, farm people are willing to come longer distances to all types of meetings. Fewer and better churches are offered.

This stopped the steady decline which both churches had been experiencing. The Methodist Conference sent a man to supply the federated church, and Presbyterians and Methodists followed him loyally during his three years' pastorate. He put into actual practice a fine spirit of brotherhood, which most of us in our divided churches so seldom practice.

His successor is a Presbyterian, but he likewise has proved that there are an increasing number of ministers who have the equipment and attitude for uniting instead of separating Church people. His men's class of 40 members, his fine orchestra of 8 pieces, his class of 20 boys, his Vacation Church School of 105 children, are all indicative of his progressive program.

The most recent consolidation movement in Fair Haven is the removing of the denominational fence in the federated church. Although for five years they have met together and employed only one pastor, yet they have had two missionary societies, two sets of church officials, two headquarters to look to for supervision. On a recent Sunday they ended their five-year period of divided administration. First the officers discussed the subject and voted in favor of forming themselves into only one denomination. Three months later the members of both groups remained after church and voted on the three following questions: [1]

1. Do you favor the uniting of our churches, forming a single church, connected with only one denomination?
2. Do you think that a two-thirds majority should decide which denomination the united church should be connected with?
3. Do you think it would be better for the united church to be connected with the Methodist or with the Presbyterian denomination?

The vote was favorable and the Methodists voted almost unanimously that in order to have just one denomination they would all become Presbyterians. The supervisors of most denominations favor such arrangements, according to what is called by Church administrators "a mutual exchange of fields." In other words since the Methodists are all becoming Presbyterians here, an equitable arrangement would be, in order to complete this union, for the Presbyterians in some other community in the state to enter the Methodist denomination.

[1] The uniting of the Fair Haven churches was described by the author in an article in the American Agriculturist, and some of the material is used here again, by permission of the editor.

Fair Haven's contribution to American village life is to have fewer organizations, to eliminate the competition of organizations that have similar programs, and to use fewer but better leaders.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. Due to improved farm machinery, agricultural economic conditions, and many other factors our rural population is decreasing. This means that church organizations are also naturally decreasing. There is a general demand among laymen for the uniting of competitive churches.

The Scripture of the Chapter. The things that keep our small competitive rural churches apart seemed important in bygone days, but now they seem nonessential. Peter and the other disciples felt that they should not associate religiously with men like Cornelius, but God showed Peter his mistake. Likewise God is revealing to us in many ways that we, his followers, should not be so divided.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. The three churches in Sherman united into one congregation and called it "The Sherman Community Church." What can you say for and against this arrangement? How would you have done it differently?
2. The two churches in Fair Haven federated and employed one pastor. Later they became one denomination. What is to be said for and against this plan?
3. There is competition in four out of five rural communities, according to a survey of 179 counties made by the Institute of Social and Religious Research. All agree that this situation should be changed. What steps would you suggest in solving this problem?
4. Often where there is need for uniting the churches in a community, each congregation appoints a committee. These committees meet jointly and talk over plans for union. Should any steps be taken in your community toward church union? If so, what steps?
5. Just before Jesus left his disciples he prayed for them and for all his followers in these words, "Neither for these only do I pray, but for them also that believe on me through their word; that they may all be one; . . . that the world may believe that thou didst send me." *John 17:20, 21.* As you think of this prayer how do you feel about denominational differences? What can we do about this difference in our local community?

A LOOK INTO THE LOCAL SITUATION

If there is need for the uniting of churches in your community, the following steps will lead toward this union:

1. A friendly spirit and a generous attitude toward the other church.
2. Some united projects, such as a Vacation Church School, a pro-

gram of week-day religious education, a joint father-and-son or mother-and-daughter banquet, or a church census.

3. Joint meetings of the officials of the two churches to discuss a plan for coöperation, or union.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"How Can Local Churches Come Together?" by Hooker, 82 pages. 25 cents. Suggests ways and means of uniting churches.

"United Churches," by Hooker, 306 pages. Doubleday, Doran, $2.75, A careful study of the success of those churches which have united.

"The Town and Country Church in the United States," by Morse and Brunner, 179 pages. Board of National Missions, $1.50. A scientific study of rural church growth and decline.

CHAPTER V

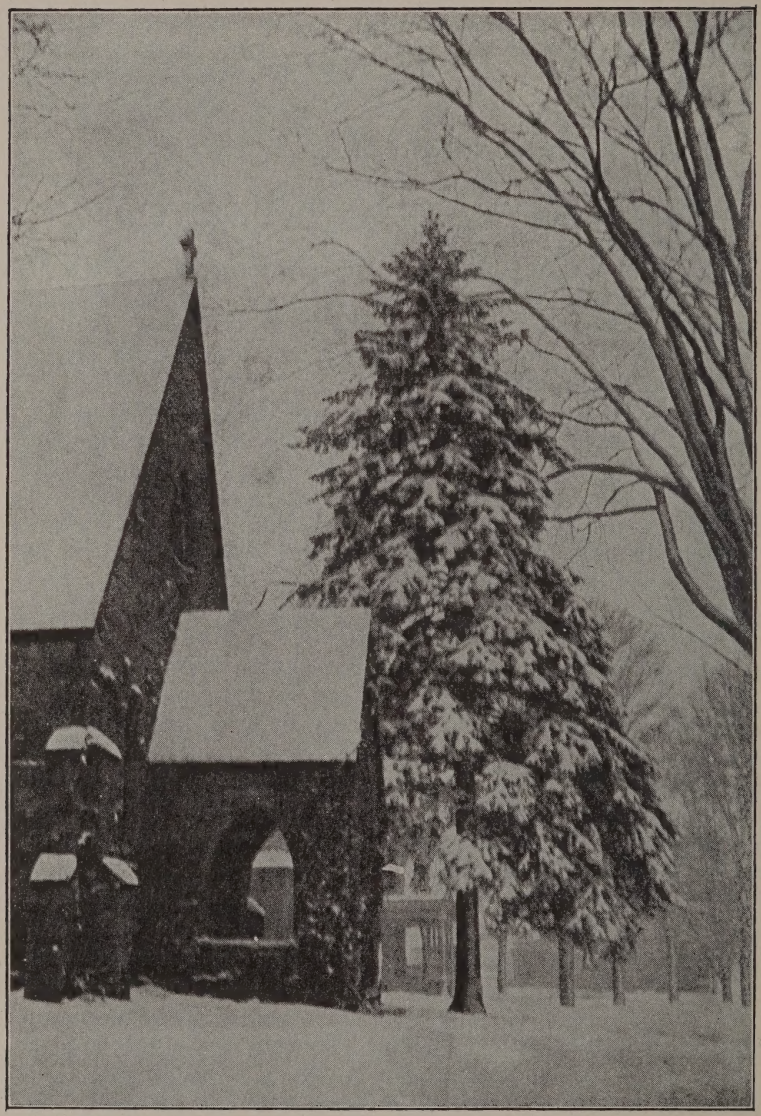
HONORING GOD IN THE COUNTRYSIDE

The Gist of the Chapter. When a Moslem in the Orient must arouse a fellow believer from sleep early in the morning he does so by calling to him, "God is one!" We Christians often need to be aroused with this same eternal truth of the reality and unity of God.

A Pennsylvania man would not attend church one Sunday evening to hear a visiting minister preach because he thought that in his morning sermon the speaker used too many illustrations from modern life. This same man, who pretended such piety, was not considered a good risk by the village merchants and was asked to pay cash for his purchases. Some one should arouse him also with the call, "God is one!" The same devotion which he puts into his Sunday worship should be put into his Monday business.

The members of a certain village church seem to an outsider to hold up a very rigid standard for their pastor. They demand the services of a very godly man to stand in their pulpit and to proclaim the words of eternal life to them. But they are six months behind with his salary. Micah would no doubt say to this congregation, "What doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

We should observe the Sabbath but we should also observe the Eighteenth Amendment. We should obey the Ten Commandments but we should also obey the one Commandment which Jesus gave us about loving our neighbor as ourselves. We do this by selling pure milk, by seeing that the water in the school well is pure. We do this by putting the best apples in the bottom of the basket instead of on top. We honor God in the countryside by the way we treat our hired help, our tenant, our neighbor. We honor him in many ways through our daily work.



A beautiful church like this is a benediction to its humdrum little village.

The Scripture

Woe to them that devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds! when the morning is light, they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away: and they oppress a man and his house, even a man and his heritage. . . . Wherewith shall I come before Jehovah, and bow myself before the high God? shall I come before him with burnt-offerings, with calves a year old? will Jehovah be pleased with thousands of rams, or with ten thousands of rivers of oil? shall I give my first-born for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He hath showed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth Jehovah require of thee, but to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God?

—*Micah 2:1, 2; 6:6-8.*

THE RELIGION OF TWO HUNDRED FARMERS

A recent study was made of 200 dairy farmers living near Chicago. This survey showed that those who are Church members are more progressive in their farm practices than are nonmembers. They are also more responsive, as you would expect, to idealistic motives. This study was made by careful investigators from the Chicago Theological Seminary: Carl R. Hutchinson, Research Associate, and Arthur E. Holt, Professor of Social Ethics. The farmers were visited personally by these investigators.

The following table shows the attitude of these men regarding the Church:

"Strong" for the Church	34	per cent
Moderately for the Church	22.5	per cent
Weak in their indorsement of the Church	36	per cent
Neutral	7	per cent
Opposed to the Church	0.5	per cent

Although the first group, those who are strong for the Church, represents little more than one third of the total, yet it comprises two thirds of those who are likewise strong for progressive farm organizations such as the Farm Bureau and the Pure Milk Association. The church makes us social-minded, interested in others, willing to join with others in worth-while tasks.

Likewise, the one third who are strong for the Church com-

prise 42 per cent of those who tested their cows for tuberculosis before they were compelled to do so by law. These Church men, as this survey shows, are more concerned for human health and happiness than for the loss which might accrue to them personally if some of their cows reacted to the test and had to be slaughtered. The Church actually registers in conduct. These men much more than non-Church men were concerned for the health of the babies in the city who drank the milk from their herds.

These men would come up to Micah's standard, "to do justly, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with thy God."

MODERN CRUSADERS

Not long ago in an isolated village along the Palestine coast a group of American teachers were camping for the night. The natives debated whether they would allow these foreign visitors to pitch their tent on the village threshing floor. Finally one whose judgment carried weight, said, "Let them stay; they are crusaders, carriers of the cross."

He was right even though they were not on a romantic quest for the wooden cross. Every person who stands between ignorance and progress, as they were doing, is a crusader.

In every rural community, and in every county, campaigns are needed—campaigns for better health, for books and libraries, for better schools, for those agencies that will make the community a better place in which to live. We greatly need modern crusaders.

It was found that in a certain county with 20,000 rural people only 1 person in 10 had library facilities. The 4,200 children in the rural schools needed good books to read just as much as did their city cousins. But taxes were already too high. This county never had had a book truck to go around to the schools and stores and homes; why begin now? No one seemed to understand how a rural traveling library would be operated. There was conservatism and misunderstanding and opposition.

In order to get this traveling library a campaign of education had to be waged. Meetings were held. Seventeen neigh-

borhoods had county library meetings in one period of two weeks. Finally the movement won. The book truck was purchased. The rural librarian was employed, and these 4,200 farm boys and girls now have access to the world's best literature.

In looking back over the group that carried on that campaign it is interesting to note that each one of those who bore the burden of work and criticism is active in his or her church. One is a teacher of a young men's Sunday School class; one is superintendent of a Beginners Department; another is active in her church guild; one handles the benevolences of his church. All of them from week to week are seeking ways of putting into practice the words of the Great Teacher.

After the vote was taken and this county rural library was ready to be started, the chairman of the Board of Supervisors was instructed to appoint a commission to be responsible for it. The commissioners were to serve without pay. Their only remuneration was the help they were to give to the boys and girls throughout the county.

Who are the three farm people on this county library commission? One is a teacher of a large Sunday School class of young people, a class which has doubled in membership during this busy year. Another teaches a class of young men in his country church. He is also a member of his choir and a busy church official. The third, likewise from a church of the open country, carries the responsibility of superintendent of his Sunday School. While the membership of his church has been depleted from year to year by people moving to the city, he stays by the little white church and holds together the organization. But he takes time to give attention to this library work. These three men are honoring God in this rural county by sending this book wagon on its daily rounds.

We honor God not "with burnt-offerings" or "with thousands of rams" but by the way we treat our neighbors and provide for our neighbors' children.

THIRTEEN HUNDRED HONEST SCALES

In a certain fruit county where everyone weighs or measures his fruit as he sells it, a county official went around and tested

the farmers' scales. He wanted to see how honest these people are. He tested 1,463 scales and found 1,323 or 91 per cent of them accurate. Even the 9 per cent that were faulty could not be charged against the honesty of their owners in each case, because often they were old and rusty.

Who buys a bushel of potatoes from a farmer nowadays and watches to see if he gets honest measure? We expect nothing but honest weights and measures. We may not have so many testimony meetings on Sunday as we once did in the country, or as we should have now, but we honor God daily by the way we buy and sell our produce.

A city business man who was motoring one day through the countryside stopped at a roadside market. To him it was but one of many such places to attract speeding tourists, but to the farm woman who had it in charge, it was a way of earning some extra money, above the limited income from the farm, which might make it possible for her oldest daughter to enter college in the autumn. The apples which he purchased pleased the visitor and he ordered a barrel sent to his city home. He handed out some money and sped on without waiting for his change. When he returned to the city the apples were there. The few remaining cents of change due him were carefully sent along also. This peculiar type of honesty attracted his attention. He took a sample of the apples to his Manufacturers' Club, gave his friends this woman's address, and told them that she could be trusted with their orders. When it was time for college to open in the autumn they had ordered nearly a thousand dollars' worth of apples. This woman's honesty won the interest of these men and netted her enough returns to send her daughter to college.

Micah had to condemn people who "devise iniquity and work evil upon their beds!" "When the morning is light," said the prophet, "they practise it, because it is in the power of their hand. And they covet fields, and seize them; and houses, and take them away."

But since those words were written a new Teacher rules men's hearts. In every church, in every community, many of his followers are trying to live to his honor. They love their neighbor as themselves. They honor God by their daily life in the countryside.

THE MARKS OF A CHRISTIAN

How can you tell a Christian from a non-Christian when you drive into a rural community for the first time? One day a landscape demonstration was being held in a certain neighborhood seven miles out from town. It was discovered suddenly that another automobile was needed to transport some of the city people out there. The two men most active in the planting of the shrubs discussed this request that came to them over the telephone.

"I'll take my car and go after them," said one of the two men.

"No, let them stay behind," said the other. "It isn't your responsibility to get them out here." But nevertheless the man drove into town and brought out the load of people.

One of these men is not a Church man, says he doesn't feel the need of the Church. The other is superintendent of his Sunday School. He explained his trip to town thus: "When I can help a fellow out, no matter how busy I am, I feel that I ought to do it."

A certain county needed a health officer, another public nurse, and in fact a whole county health department. But people were not greatly interested in this need. In fact some of the doctors opposed any change, fearing that it might interfere with their business. Who among the county Board of Supervisors would sponsor such an unpopular cause? Two men, however, did—one an elder in the Presbyterian church, the other a member of the official board in his Methodist denomination. People who are willing to espouse an unpopular but needed health program in the face of opposition bear the marks of Christians.

A village needed a new schoolhouse—a modern, centralized school with vocational teachers, a large playground with gymnasium, laboratories, and other modern equipment. There was the usual opposition. Personal accusations were heaped upon the leaders. Finally the new school was built. Who are the three men who carried the burden of this campaign? One is a Presbyterian elder, one is superintendent of the Baptist Sunday School, and the third teaches the men's class in the Methodist church.

A modern Christian wears the garb of a nurse to-day and

the mail of a warrior to-morrow; that is, if the cause of right needs a defender. A halo would not feel very comfortable on the heads of many of our present-day Christians who fight for law enforcement, child welfare, public health departments, equal library privileges for all, centralized schools, testing of cattle, coöperative marketing of farm produce, graded lessons in the Sunday School, the "every-member canvass," regulation of public dance halls, Sunday closing of moving pictures, fair treatment of tenant farmers, equal opportunities for immigrant neighbors, and a host of other vexing questions. But it is here that we honor God as we solve these problems daily among our neighbors.

A home-economics club in a small hamlet was urged by one of its members to provide play equipment for the local school. The vote was favorable and this woman who talked of the need of the playground was made chairman of a committee to get the money and build the equipment. After a few weeks the socials she planned netted the required funds and a day was set for the building of the play apparatus. No one came to help. She went into the country store where seven able-bodied men were sitting around the stove, and asked for help. They were all "busy," they said, and got up one by one and went home. She asked another man. He refused because, as he said, "Children should be larned to work instead of to play." The next man said that he would be glad to help her ordinarily but that he didn't want to go out in such bad weather. She had been going all forenoon. Finally two young men volunteered their services. The older boys in the school helped. The lumber and pipe were hauled, and seesaws, a set of swings, and a horizontal bar were all built before dark.

Who is this woman who has the needs of these school children so much on her heart? She lives in an isolated farmhouse on the side of a hill. Few people outside of her community know her name. She is honoring God nevertheless by her fearless leadership for the sake of the youth of her community.

One October day while driving out to a local home-economics club of farm women, the county agent said she feared that the new president of the club was too busy with Church work to give any time to the Home Bureau. The Home

Bureau is nonsectarian and nonpartisan and takes in everyone in the neighborhood. It therefore has many opportunities for community projects. At the meeting which was planned on this particular day the people present discussed, one after another, what was wrong with this community.

"The church is dead," some said. Other complaints were as follows: "The rural school that once had forty pupils now has only twelve"; "there are only six young people left in the community now"; "we need electricity on our farms but they won't build a power line out here"; "there is nothing here to go to, so our young people go to town for their good times, and eventually stay there."

The new president saw through all the discouragement a better day ahead. A home talent play that her group soon put on in the church packed the old brick building so that extra chairs had to be provided for the crowd. A mass meeting discussed plans for securing the much-needed electric lights. Canvassers were appointed who went from farm to farm to get people to sign up with a neighboring electric-power line.

Electric lights are in forty of these farm homes now. The four schools have been provided with swings. Pride has taken the place of discouragement.

This humble, consecrated woman has changed selfishness to unselfishness, greed and self-seeking to generosity and giving, discouragement and narrowness to joy and thanksgiving.

"What does dramatics have to do with religion?" you ask. "Or what relation is there between electric lights and the light of the gospel?" Simply this: a comfortable home and a friendly community give religion a better chance to grow in our hearts.

The lonely prophet on Mount Carmel, when faced by the clamors of the four hundred men who had grown used to the customs of idol worship, cried out: "How long go ye limping between the two sides? if Jehovah be God, follow him." It is said that there are 101,000 rural churches in the United States. In each of these there are men and women who in their daily life, in their buying and selling, in their exchange of work during threshing and haying times, in all their dealings in community matters are not limping between two sides. They

know as Elijah did that "Jehovah . . . is God" and they choose to "follow him."

But this religion of the countryside cannot simply be taught. It must be caught. Like the publican of Jericho, we catch it by having Jesus in our home. After the intimate association with him in our homes we stand up and say with Zacchæus, "Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have wrongfully exacted aught of any man, I restore fourfold."

But more men and women are needed who are ready to honor God in the countryside.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. People remember what we do longer than they remember what we say. We are all seeking ways to honor God. The theme of this chapter is that we honor him not only by what we say, not only by entering our names on the Church roll, but especially by the honest methods we use in trading, buying, and selling, and the way in which we treat our tenants, our hired help, and our live stock. Our Sunday religion must continue through Monday even when the clothesline breaks or the tractor stalls.

The Scripture of the Chapter. The prophets such as Micah, Amos, Hosea, and others kept calling attention to the practices of their day when men pretended piety and at the same time were unjust or dishonest. Jesus pronounced his most bitter denunciations against such practices, such as the following:

"Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye cleanse the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full from extortion and excess. Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first the inside of the cup and of the platter, that the outside thereof may become clean also." Matt. 23: 25, 26.

SOMETHING TO DO

Fasten the following poem on the wall above the kitchen sink or take it with you while plowing and commit it to memory. It was written by a girl of nineteen, who is in domestic service, and was read to a big congregation by Dr. G. Campbell Morgan at one of his services at Westminster Chapel, London:

I Do It Unto Thee

Lord of all pots and pans and things,
since I've no time to be
A saint by doing lovely things, or watching—
late with thee,

Or dreaming in the dawn light, or storming heaven's gates,
Make me a saint by getting meals and washing up the plates!

Although I must have Martha's hands
I have a Mary mind,
And when I black the boots and shoes
thy sandals, Lord, I find!
I think of how they trod the earth
what time I scrub the floor.
Accept this meditation, Lord! I haven't time for more.

Warm all the kitchen with thy love, and light it with thy peace!
Forgive me all my worrying, and make all grumbling cease!
Thou who didst love to give men food in room or by the sea,
Accept this service that I do—I do it unto thee!

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. What are the principal marks of difference between a neighbor of yours who belongs to the Church and your neighbors who belong to no church? Be fair in your estimates.

2. Go over in your mind or by writing down on paper the names of the officers of your local organizations: the master and the lecturer of the Grange; the chairman of the Farm Bureau or Farmers' Club; the members of the School Board; and see if the men who are willing to give their time to these public offices are Church men. How does the Church make a person public-spirited?

3. We sing, "I'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord," and "I'll say what you want me to say." When bootleggers flourish in our midst, should we continue to sing this if we do nothing to stop their illicit business? What should be done about it in this community?

4. Would you care to own a farm or live in a community where there is no church, and where people do not attend church?

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"Rural Religion and the Country Church," by Wilson, 141 pages. Revell, $1.25. An interesting statement regarding the function of the country church by a great rural leader.

"A Christian in the Countryside," by Felton, 134 pages. Methodist Book Concern, 50 cents. A series of lessons showing the marks of a Christian.

CHAPTER VI

A CHRISTIAN FARM HOME

The Gist of the Chapter. An organization of farm people at a recent meeting conducted a debate on the question, "Resolved, That the Farm Home Is a Better Place to Rear a Family than the City Home." The city side won. The 150 farmers present were anything but pleased.

"If the debaters on the negative side think that the city is such a fine place to live," said some of the farmers after the debate was over, "why don't they move to town?"

"Talk" may win a debate, but it will never make a farm home—or a city home, either—the place we want it to be. This will take more than arguments in a debate. Let us see what are the elements of an ideal farm home.

In the first place, such a home must be a Christian home, at the center of which is ever the Unseen Guest, who is present at every meal and whose name is lisped in prayer by the smallest child as the evening shadows fall across the threshold and the day comes to a close. It must also be a home where school and books and music and health are given preference over money and lands and hogs—a home where education and culture are desired. Creative work that builds mind as well as muscle must take the place of drudgery and routine in an ideal farm home. Such a home is a democracy where laws are made *by* as well as *for* each member of the family, and where there are as many labor-saving devices in the house as out in the fields. In an ideal home there will be a wise use of the leisure time of the family. Children will be considered the best of crops and home-making the greatest of callings. What does the following Scripture suggest concerning the spirit and atmosphere of the home in Bethany in which Christ was the welcomed Guest?

The Scripture

Now as they went on their way, he entered into a certain village: and a certain woman named Martha received him into her house.

And she had a sister called Mary, who also sat at the Lord's feet, and heard his word. But Martha was cumbered about much serving; and she came up to him, and said, Lord, dost thou not care that my sister did leave me to serve alone? bid her therefore that she help me. But the Lord answered and said unto her, Martha, Martha, thou art anxious and troubled about many things: but one thing is needful: for Mary hath chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.

—*Luke 10:38-42.*

LETTERS FROM CHILDREN IN FARM HOMES

On Sunday the whole family went away except me. I went and got some playmates to play some games. We played football, "running tag," and many other games. In the afternoon we all got books and read. After we read the books we began to play "school" for the rest of the afternoon. When my people came home we went out to our neighbors'.—*Lyman, aged 12.*

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Sunday morning I got up at seven o'clock and helped to get breakfast. Then I helped with the dishes and went out of doors for the rest of the morning. After dinner I washed the dishes because my mother was getting ready to go away. It took me forty minutes to wash the dishes. I finished reading a book at a quarter to three. Then some of the neighbor children came down and we played ball until five o'clock. Then we came in the house and we played the victrola for half an hour. Then we went out on the porch and watched the cars go by until six o'clock. Then the neighbor children went home. I built the fire and carried two pails of water, and got supper for my two brothers and myself. My mother did not come home to supper. It took me thirty-five minutes to get supper. When it was ready it took me fifteen minutes to eat, and twenty minutes to wash the dishes. I played the victrola until eight o'clock. Then my mother came home, and I visited with my mother and father until nine o'clock. After this I went to bed.—*Jessie, aged 15.*

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The average farmer owns a car. More of our taxes are spent for roads than for schools, health, child welfare, police protection, and everything else combined. Jessie wrote in the above letter that she "went out on the porch and watched the cars go by until six o'clock." Some other children were probably watching her father and mother go by that afternoon. As she said, she had to wait until eight in the evening to visit with her mother and father.

Lyman, too, had everything except the companionship of his parents.

This all raises the question of the effect the automobile is to have on our farm homes. Is the family "sing" in the afternoon to give place to the victrola, and is the evening story hour by mother and father to give way to the professional broadcaster? We need to come back, do we not, to the simple, time-honored family rituals—the grace at meals, the reading together as a family, the Sunday dinner, the family "sing," the evening story hour, the tucking of the children in bed, and the good-night kisses?

This age of machinery has advanced our civilization. Scientific discoveries have enriched every home. The freedom, the independence, the ease of getting away have widened our horizons. Women especially are experiencing a new age, an age of freedom. But there is a satisfaction in the work we do for our home and family that cannot be gained elsewhere. A young mother living in New Mexico, her wider ambitions curtailed by her family ties, once described her feelings in a poem which she called "Compensation":

I might have sung great songs to-day—
My soul was in the Muse's sway,
And yet, somehow I lost my song;
My hands were busy all day long.

I bound a hurt and throbbing finger,
And dried the tears that tried to linger;
I buttered bread and baked a cake;
I kissed two sleepy eyes awake.

My song is gone, but in my heart
Is music that can ne'er depart.
The world will never hear its note—
Its sweet strains did not leave my throat:

But resting softly in their beds
I see three tousled little heads,
And sweeter sounds than any other,
Come whispered words: "I love you, mother!"

BOOKS AND MUSIC

Some adults may claim that they do not read books in these days of the radio, but this cannot be truthfully said of children. Boys and girls like to read and will read good books if they have the chance. A certain superintendent of rural

schools recently urged his school trustees and teachers to buy a number of new books for the school libraries. Three and a half months after these books had been purchased a study was made of the number of books that had been read by the school children of this entire township. They had averaged more than a book a month, as is shown by the following table:

Age of pupils	Books read in 3½ months
7	5
8	3
9	4½
10	4½
11	4½
12	7
13	5½
14	20
15	60

At this rate the average farm boy or girl would naturally read 390 books during his or her school years in the first eight grades. Some rural institution—the home, the school, or a rural traveling library—should provide these books. It was found that in 81 rural schools in this same county the average number of books in the school libraries was less than one half the desired number of 390, and that only 2 of the 81 schools had 390 or more books.

We want our farm homes to be places of culture, where good books are read, where good music is appreciated, where a premium is put upon education. What kind of reading is often provided in these homes? Here are a few quotations from letters from some of them:

In the morning, which was Sunday, I went uptown and bought a Sunday paper. After looking at it, I read awhile and finished my school lessons. At night I wished to see what our new minister looked like, so I went to church. He had been a traveling man, and I enjoyed his sermon on the way nations lived and their method of religion. I went home and soon retired for the next school day.—*Joseph, aged 13.*

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On Sunday I read some of the Sunday paper. Then I went down to my raft awhile, then came home and went to Sunday School. When I came home I ate my supper, read awhile, then went to bed.—*Melvin, aged 12.*

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Sunday morning when I awoke it wasn't clear. I helped with the dishes and did a few things toward straightening up the house. I then dressed for church. I read the comics before going to church. After church and Sunday School I went home to dinner. About two o'clock Gertrude called me on the phone and asked me to take a ride, so I went. We had a very delightful time. It was late when I returned, so I went to bed.—*Martha, aged 13.*

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Sunday morning I got up and tended to my pigeons, got my breakfast, went to church and Sunday School, came home and read the Sunday paper. I took a walk, and then came in and got my supper. I read some more of the paper, and at nine o'clock I went to bed.—*Howard, aged 12.*

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On Sunday I looked at the funny paper. After that I read books and Western magazines.—*Howard, aged 13.*

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The writer has two hundred letters or compositions similar to the above from farm boys and girls, telling what they did on the previous Sunday. Three fourths of them said that they read the Sunday paper. While it is impossible to measure the amount of time spent on the comics, it appears as if more time is spent in this way than in church and Sunday School.

Many books have been written recently on the rural church. Prophecies have been made regarding its future. Can we not determine its future by the ideals we give our children each week while they are growing up and getting their life standards?

It is not the purpose of the writer to say dogmatically what ought to be done. A more desirable course seems to be to present some of the facts and raise some questions for discussion, with the hope that we may arrive at some solutions. In the matter of books, for example, it is quite apparent that more books suitable for children are needed in the average farm home. The rural traveling library, often called the county library, is now, ten years after its introduction, operating in 275 of the 3,000 counties in the United States. As this "bookmobile" service is extended the farm homes will be enriched. Children's books of unquestioned value should also be added to the home libraries.

As to the question of music, it is evident that the radio and victrola have largely taken the place of the old-fashioned singing school. Each farm home should have a victrola and a radio, if possible, provided that along with them condi-

tions are such that the children are taught to sing and to play musical instruments.

A study was made of the musical knowledge and activities of a hundred farm children between the ages of twelve and fifteen. The following table made from this study reveals either a dearth of interest in music or more probably a lack of opportunity to learn music:

Those children who	
Play the piano	22 per cent
Play the organ	16 per cent
Sing in a children's choir in church	10 per cent
Take part in musical recitals	6 per cent
Play the violin	5 per cent
Play in an orchestra	2 per cent
Play the cornet	1 per cent

Many churches are organizing children's choirs. The importance of music in the home is being discussed by parents' groups in Sunday School classes, in mothers' clubs, and in parent-teacher associations. Many people are thinking of music on the victrola and radio as simply supplemental to that provided by our own families. But even more emphasis needs to be placed on the teaching of music to children.

"ON THE FARM WE CAN MAKE THINGS"

A certain boy who had always lived in the city moved with his parents out to the old family farm home. When asked which he preferred, the city or the farm, he was very sure that he liked the farm better.

"But you had plenty of playmates when you lived in town. You could play all sorts of games," he was reminded.

He still insisted that he would rather live in the country. Finally he explained.

"In the city I did have more playmates. We played more games there. But here on the farm I can make things."

This idea of creative work, a chance to "make things," is one of the great assets of the farm home.

Play is spontaneous activity. It is what a boy or girl does when he is turned loose. Work that is self-selected, self-directed, and creative is the highest form of play. Parents

on the farm have a great opportunity to encourage their children in creative work.

The activities of a hundred farm children were tabulated by the writer to determine what fills the day of an average boy or girl. The hundred children who were selected for this study were in the sixth, seventh, and eighth grades at school; that is, they were from twelve to fifteen years of age. The absence of creative work and the predominance of routine work or drudgery are quite noticeable. The tasks marked by an asterisk (*), about one fourth of the total number, might be called creative work. Note how the drudgery tasks predominate.

Pulling weeds in the garden	78 per cent
Washing dishes	70 per cent
Gathering the eggs	69 per cent
Carrying in the firewood	67 per cent
Doing chores	62 per cent
Sweeping the floors	59 per cent
Making the beds	58 per cent
*Baking a cake	53 per cent
Washing the auto	50 per cent
Cutting wood	50 per cent
Feeding the chickens	49 per cent
Making a garden	48 per cent
Feeding the stock	45 per cent
Washing clothes	40 per cent
Scrubbing the floor	30 per cent
*Baking pies	36 per cent
*Baking cookies	35 per cent
*Having a garden of my own	34 per cent
Milking the cows	33 per cent
*Raising chickens of my own	24 per cent
*Canning foods	24 per cent
*Making my own clothes	21 per cent
*Baking bread	18 per cent
*Driving a tractor	17 per cent
*Running a hot-dog stand	10 per cent

It seems after looking at this list that the things the parents do not want to do are often assigned to the children.

OWNERSHIP

The work around a farm home ceases to become drudgery for the children and becomes creative activity in so far as the feeling of ownership enters into it. In the above table

78 per cent said that they pulled weeds in the garden, but 34 per cent said that they had gardens of their own. Others raised chickens of their own. This feeling of ownership changes work into play, drudgery into recreation, routine into creative activity. The parents of the children listed in this next table are giving them this opportunity.

Those children who	
Earn money	66 per cent
Have bank accounts of their own	60 per cent
Own dogs	46 per cent
Own bicycles	35 per cent
Sell things to make money	35 per cent
Get allowances	27 per cent
Own pet rabbits	18 per cent
Own calves	13 per cent
Own pigeons	13 per cent
Own horses	13 per cent
Own pigs	10 per cent

It would seem that the opportunity for ownership for boys and girls on the farm could be greatly increased; in most families each child could have a calf or a pig or a pet of some kind. The Four-H Club work is calling attention to these creative interests in farm youth.

LOVE FOR FARM LIFE

An attempt was made in this study to learn the attitude of the boys and girls towards the farm by asking them what they want to do when they grow up. The results are as follows:

Those who want to	
Be engineers	31 per cent
Be aviators	29 per cent
Be professional baseball players	25 per cent
Work in a factory	22 per cent
Be teachers	22 per cent
Work in an office	19 per cent
Be nurses	16 per cent
Be farmers	11 per cent
Be ministers	6 per cent
Be doctors	6 per cent

Attention is called to the fact that this is not an accurate measurement of the children's love for farming. Many

checked two or more occupations. Apparently they checked anything that appealed to them. The fact, however, that being a farmer comes so near the bottom of the list is significant. The children, as pointed out above, have mostly drudgery work to do at home, and the parents take very little time to enter into the imaginative or play life of the children. Hence life on the farm does not make the appeal to them that it should.

No one would say that all farm boys and girls should become farmers. But we should all agree that they should grow up happy in their farm homes, getting the most out of these formative years on the farm with their parents. As adults we face the responsibility of enriching these homes more than we have ever done before.

HOW TO ENRICH OUR FARM HOMES

One Sunday morning while riding along a snowy road in Michigan the writer's attention was drawn to a white house and a big red barn which comprised "Prairie View Farm." The owner, with that pride in his farm which is so admirable, had given his farm a name. He had painted the name in large letters on the gable end of the barn. Underneath the name of the farm were the words, "Jas. Robb and Son, Proprietors." "That's a fine idea," we said. "Instead of old man Robb moving to town to loaf around the village streets and complain about taxes and vote against village improvements, or perhaps start another filling station, he has retired out here to his farm where he can be a part of the life about him."

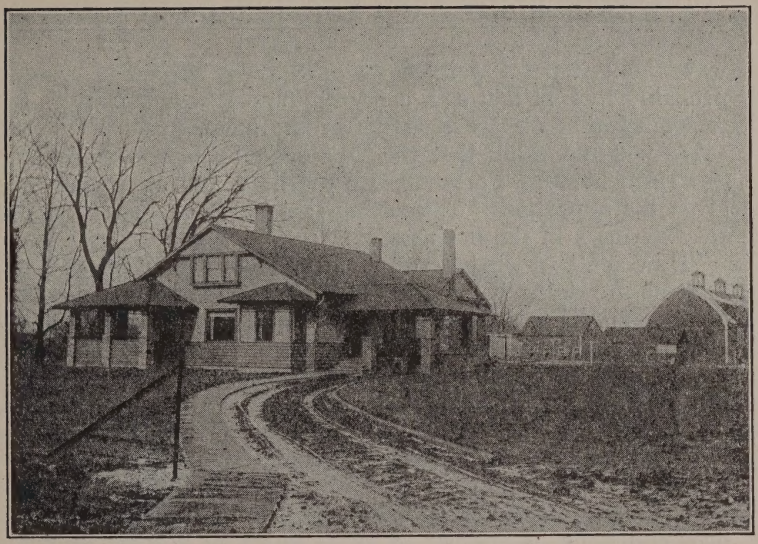
"No, Mr. Robb is a young man, scarcely thirty," we were told.

"Then how old is the son who is in partnership with him?" we asked.

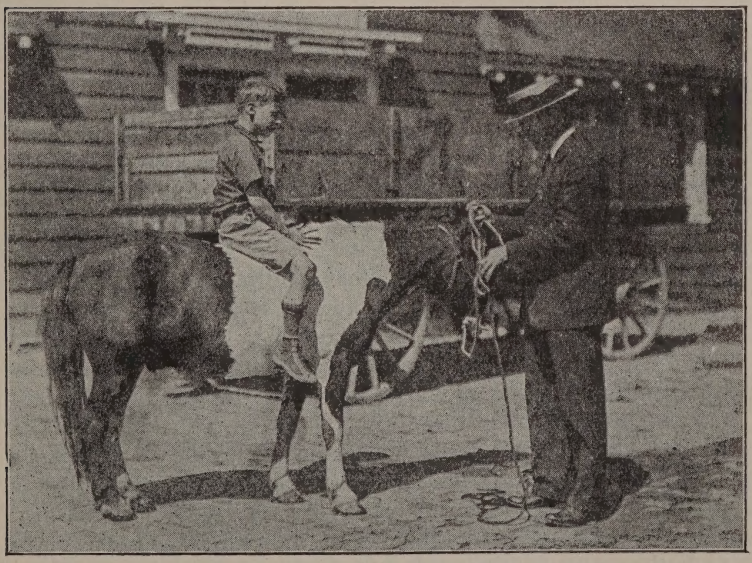
"About four."

The more we thought about it, the more interesting the sign became. As we returned we stopped and asked Mr. Robb why he painted that sign, "Jas. Robb and Son, Proprietors."

"Several of the neighbors have remarked about it," he began apologetically. "You see, I want my boy to grow up here and to know that he is in partnership with me. I felt that



The modern farm home is a democracy where laws are made *by* as well as *for* each member of the family, where all are partners in the business.



The feeling of ownership changes work into play, drudgery into recreation, routine into creative activity.

way about it, so I painted it. I thought he and I would probably look at that sign every day and it would help us to remember that we are partners in the business."

Do you not think that this Michigan farmer is enriching this farm home? Fortunate are the boys and girls who are given the opportunity of knowing that they and their parents are "partners in the business."

"How shall we enrich our farm homes?" you ask.

Some are doing it by installing labor-saving devices in the house: electric lights, running water, and power-driven machinery. Others are enriching their leisure-time activities. Family picnics are planned. Vacations are taken. Children are given small allowances so that they can have their own money. Many husbands and wives are using joint checking accounts. Homes are changing from patriarchal to democratic institutions.

In a certain Quaker home of limited means the children own and enjoy a number of pets: Shetland ponies, rabbits, collie dogs, and prize-winning chickens. The neighbors sometimes wonder how the day's work gets done on this farm, but all of them agree that it is a happy, worth-while home.

One of the many ways in which families are enriching their home life is by having things in common. The radio is giving them their entertainment at home together. A certain New Hampshire Grange has what it calls "Family Nights." The entertainment part of the program is furnished by a different family at each meeting. The meetings are scheduled a year in advance. Practicing together for a year strengthens family ties and the family pride.

The Church is still our one great family institution. Lodges are for father or mother, but seldom for both. The children go alone to school or to Scout meetings. Four-H Clubs and the Farm Bureau divide adults and youth. We have many organizations in our modern American life—some think too many—and as a rule they divide families instead of uniting them. The Church is the one great institution to which we can go as a united family. Our modern churches have a place and a program for all ages. As we strengthen our rural church we also strengthen the farm family. Shall we not give to both a new loyalty and a fresh devotion?

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. A Christian farm home is a place where children are looked upon as the best of crops, where books and music and culture are given greater importance than automobiles or pure breeds or bumper crops, where each day the members of the family seek humbly to walk in the footsteps of the Man of Galilee.

The Scripture of the Chapter. Nothing else can bring the necessary home spirit to father and mother and children as can the presence of the welcome Guest who in the Bethany home changed worry into peace and the anxious heart into the humble disciple sitting at the Master's feet.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is the farm home really a better place than the city home in which to bring up children? Why do you think as you do?
2. Is the automobile a help or a hindrance to the ideal family life on a farm? Why?
3. Re-read the poem entitled "Compensation" written by the New Mexico mother, in which she tells of the deeper joys of parenthood. Do you think that most mothers feel practically the same way about what is most worth while in a day's work?
4. Is the Sunday newspaper a help or a hindrance in the character development of our children?
5. Do you think that the radio, the victrola, and other similar appliances will make us better or poorer musicians?
6. The statement was made in the last paragraph of this chapter that the Church is our greatest family institution. Do you agree with this statement? Why?
7. How can you make your church more of a family institution?

SOMETHING TO DO

Assign each of the following to a person or to a committee to report upon at a later meeting:

1. The preparation of a paper on the subject, "The House Beautiful." Include in this such as the following: open lawns, shade trees, shrubbery, vines, perennials, walks, driveways, paint, cheerful furnishings, pictures of real worth, porches.
2. The preparation of a paper on "Labor-Saving Devices for the Home." Include in this such conveniences as running water, a lighting system, furnace heat, a power-driven washing machine, an oil stove or a gas stove, a kitchen cabinet, ample clothes closets, a service wagon.
3. The selection for use in the home of a list of phonograph records of music that has permanent value.
4. The selection of at least six games that parents can play at home with their children.
5. The selection of at least twenty good children's books; the list to be available for all the homes in the community.
6. The equipping of a play room in the home.

7. A suggested plan whereby children can take part in saying grace at meals.

8. The selection of a grace for use at meals, to be said by the entire family in concert.

9. The building at home of some play equipment for children. Include in this a swing, a seesaw, and a sand box.

10. The arrangements for a debate on the subject, "Resolved: That It Is the Husband's Fault that There Are Fewer Labor-Saving Devices in the House than on the Farm."

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"Harbor Lights of Home" (and other books), by Guest, 185 pages. Reilly & Lee, $1.25. Poems giving safe signals for the home.

"The Harvest of the Year to the Tiller of the Soil," by Bailey, 209 pages. Macmillan, $1.50. An appreciation of farm life.

"The Library of the Open Road," by Felton and Beal, 50 pages. New York State College of Agriculture, Ithaca, N. Y. Sent free upon request. Tells about reading for farm homes.

"Living with Our Children," by Gilbreth, 321 pages. Norton, $2.50. A book on coöperation in the home.

CHAPTER VII

BUILDING A CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY

The Gist of the Chapter. In the dirty window of a squalid house on a dingy street, a story tells us, a little girl once placed a beautiful flowering plant. The mother had to clean the dirty windowpane in order to allow the sun to get at the newly acquired flower. This one clean window proved such a contrast to the others that she felt compelled, so the story goes, to clean every window in the house, and then the floors and ceilings as well. The neighbors criticized, of course, but the contrast of the one clean house caused first one and then another to clean up. All improvement comes in patches, in this way. It starts with a small beginning; then it grows and enlarges. For Christian leaders there is great encouragement in this fact.

There are many different opinions as to how the Kingdom of God comes on earth. Jesus spoke much of this. In the words of Scripture quoted below, he tells us that we must make one community Christian, then another, and so on. The leaven keeps working, the mustard seed keeps growing, the light keeps shining, and the fruit born by his followers abides. Thus, as we build one Christian community and another, verily the Kingdom of God comes.

The Scripture

And he said, So is the kingdom of God, as if a man should cast seed upon the earth; and should sleep and rise night and day, and the seed should spring up and grow, he knoweth not how. The earth beareth fruit of herself; first the blade, then the ear, then the full grain in the ear. But when the fruit is ripe, straightway he putteth forth the sickle, because the harvest is come.

And he said, How shall we liken the kingdom of God? or in what parable shall we set it forth? It is like a grain of mustard seed, which, when it is sown upon the earth, though it be less than all the seeds that are upon the earth, yet when it is sown, groweth up, and

becometh greater than all the herbs, and putteth out great branches; so that the birds of the heaven can lodge under the shadow thereof.

—Mark 4:26-32.

Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till it was all leavened.

—Matt. 13:33.

Ye did not choose me, but I chose you, and appointed you, that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide: that whatsoever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you.

—John 15:16.

THE CHURCH AND GOOD WILL

A certain rural village has running through it a creek spanned by an old, noisy bridge. The bridge rattles as each vehicle crosses from one side to the other. The creek, with its steep banks, is but one of the many things that have divided this community for years. Petty gossip, suspicion, family differences, neighborhood quarrels have too often been present to drive out the spirit of good will and neighborliness. No organizations for youth, no provision for wholesome social life, no basketball, baseball, or football—just an empty community! Civic pride was at a low ebb. Young people looked forward to the time when they could get away. But one day things began to change.

A new pastor arrived at one of the churches. He had no particular excellency or peculiar power of leadership. He was willing to work, however, and knew fairly well how to unite his church.

He started his program with a Vacation Church School. When the public school opened in September he started week-day classes in religious education during school hours, each grade having one hour a week. A committee from the adult Bible classes promoted both the Vacation School and the week-day work.

In order to have the pupils excused from school for the week-day classes, this committee prepared little cards on which was printed the following: "To the school board of ————: You are hereby requested to excuse (pupil's name) for one

hour a week for religious instruction." A card was taken to each home by this committee, to be filled out and signed by the parents. These cards when signed were given to the school board who in turn gave permission for the classes to be held in an unused room in the schoolhouse and on school time.

There were many foreign-speaking people on the hill farms on one side of this little village. They had lived here for twenty years, but in that time they had had no contact with the "Americans," except through the high school. It was rumored that one pupil from the foreign families had attended one session of the Sunday School, but if this had happened it was not because of any effort on the part of the church. On the contrary, there had been considerable propaganda by the native-born citizens, and several meetings had been held in this village calling attention to the excellencies of the white race and the Protestant faith.

Good will was beginning to grow in the hearts of the people of this church, however, and they gradually sought friendly contacts with their foreign-speaking neighbors. A community-wide picnic was arranged by this same laymen's committee. The two nationalities ate together, played games, and made speeches to each other, until by night they began to see how much they had missed by avoiding these friendly contacts for the past twenty years.

One project after another was taken up by this church. A house-to-house friendly visitation plan was carried out jointly with "the other church." A youth council was organized, composed of the young people from the entire township. A story-telling contest was staged. A musical festival was held.

These are not "model projects," and this community would not expect a place among the "model churches" of the nation, but nevertheless in four years' time the heart of the community has changed. Pride has come in place of discouragement. The community consciousness was increased recently when one of the national agricultural journals awarded this community second place, with a silver cup as a prize, for having put across worth-while projects during the year. But better than the cup is the new interest the people have shown in their children and youth, in schools and culture, and in the task of building a Christian community.

There are many communities with the same problems that

this community faced—the same pettiness, the same quarrels, the same emptiness. A clever author could make money if he wrote a book portraying the mistakes of these little rural "Main Streets" of ours. But the men and women of this church, with their pastor, have done a bigger thing than writing a cynical book; they have saved their youth. "I chose you, and appointed you," says Jesus to his followers, "that ye should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should abide."

THE CHURCH AND REAL ESTATE

A man was once complaining to his friend about the community into which he had recently moved.

"I have bought my house and moved my family there," he said, "and now I learn that there is no Sunday School or church."

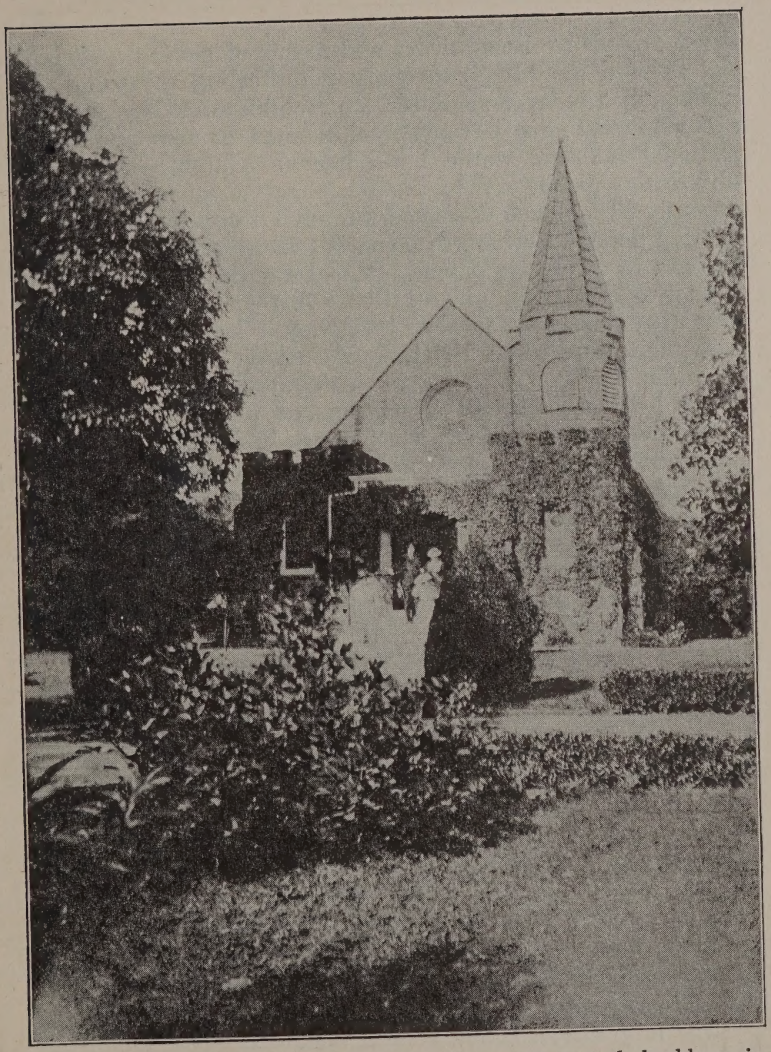
"You are the first person I ever heard of," said his friend, "with a family of children, who bought a house without first inquiring about the church."

Even people who don't support the church by their own attendance do not choose to live in a churchless community. Long ago the men who started the Christian Church were told that they were to be "the salt of earth." As we build our community life, we want the church to be at the center.

During the past few years a certain poor farming section of about six square miles has been transformed into a little suburban village of sixteen hundred people. Sidewalks were built. The water in a near-by spring was tested, a survey made, and finally a village water system installed. After a year's agitation the voters decided to incorporate. Street lights were added. The schoolhouse was enlarged. A park was laid out. Play equipment was put on the school grounds. A zoning ordinance was passed. A fire hall came next, and then a new fire truck.

These are all important and necessary improvements, but they comprise the mere skeleton of community life. They can be found in an army camp or even in a penitentiary. The family life, the attitude towards one's neighbors, the interest in child welfare—these are the things that make a community.

This phase of life, however, was neglected until one afternoon a woman living in the community invited to her home a



This church in the open country, with its lawn, vines, and shrubbery, is daily preaching the gospel of beauty.

dozen friends to discuss ways and means of getting a church. All favored the idea, and spoke with feeling regarding the need of a Sunday School for their children. They selected a committee to see if some wealthy man or some Board of National Missions would build them a church. They petitioned the presbytery to furnish them a minister without expense. They even discussed the advisability of getting two Sunday School teachers to come out from a Bible school in the city to conduct a Sunday School for them.

Each one of these plans failed. A year passed. By that time they had learned that they would have to undertake with their own hands the task of making their community Christian.

The brick masons, the carpenters and plumbers, the musicians, the Sunday School teachers and officers volunteered their services, one by one, and slowly, like the growth of a mustard seed, they built there a Christian community. A hundred thousand rural communities in America have been built in the same way. The growth is slow. Nevertheless it is by this method that ours is actually becoming a Christian nation in fact as well as in name.

COMMUNITY BUILDER

Riding along in a bus one day on the Ridge Road west of Rochester, New York, one of the passengers noticed a placard in the bus advertising the community church at Greece, a near-by town. The bus driver, when asked about this, said that although he happened to be a Catholic himself he was glad each week to put up an advertisement for this Protestant church—in fact he did it without pay—because he got a great deal of business from the people who attended this church. At the top of the placard were the words, "A Good Service in a Good Community." At the bottom of the advertisement was the statement, "Just a Nice Drive Out."

Here is a little country church that, instead of giving up to the encroaching city influence, is actually fighting its way against the city current and not only telling the farm people to stand by but also urging the city folk to "drive out" into the country to church.

We can learn something from this church about building a Christian community.

Picture in your minds this little brick church, organized back in 1814 and running on a steady keel for a hundred years. Fifteen different pastors served the little church for from three to fifteen years each. The annual expenses for all purposes did not exceed a thousand dollars. The average membership for the one hundred years was 150. Yet there has been preaching each Sunday morning and evening and a midweek prayer service.

Does not this church symbolize the typical rural church? It is well to ask if the principal sin committed in our rural churches is not the sin of mediocrity. Ours are all "average churches," neither very active nor very dead. Laymen break the heart of many a minister who wants to accomplish something, because they prefer mediocrity. A hundred years of mediocrity was what this church in New York State had had —an average membership of 150, and an average attendance of eighty in the Sunday School; at the end of the century, 160 members and an annual budget of $945. It had one room and a basement dug out only halfway back which seated 50 at the occasional church suppers. An average church!

As we look more carefully into its work we find that it had rendered two important services to its people. It had provided them with common worship and it had been a force for moral discipline. These functions had been performed by its Sunday morning and evening services and its midweek prayer meetings.

Gradually there came a change. The improved roads, the telephone, the moving pictures, the daily papers, and the encroaching city were tending to break up the old community life! The Grange was in danger of decline and the church was about to lose its influence. The only way for it to hold its place was to stop the city drift by providing for the social and educational needs of its people out there in the country.

In the fall of 1921 the pastor called a meeting of the church workers to plan for the future. It was voted at this meeting, among other things, to proceed to build the first unit of a new church in order to provide for the social and educational needs of its people. The new building was dedicated in February, 1924, more than two years later. It contains depart-

mental rooms for the Sunday School, the average attendance of which has increased from 80 to 212. The dining room under the basement of the old church, with its seats for 50, has been given up. In the new plant 200 can be provided for at church suppers. The young people who before went into the city on Sunday evenings now prefer to attend the Fellowship Club out at the home church. The basketball teams of this church, both boys' and girls' teams, use the new gymnasium and take their share of victories in the amateur tournaments. Many a city team is surprised at the final score when it comes out from the city to play with "the farmers." The men's Bible class, the backbone of this church, has an average attendance of 48. The "movies" of Rochester do not take the people away from home now. Once a week in the social assembly room are shown pictures of the very highest quality.

One of the secrets of the success of this church is the fact that everybody is willing to work in order to build a Christian community. When the pastor was asked about the success he had achieved during his twelve years here he said it was not due to his leadership, as some assumed, but to the willingness of his people to work.

"On Sunday morning," he explained, "at the annual installation service, almost fifty men and women assumed responsibility as officers and teachers for the coming year. More than fifty others have accepted definite work on committees, for special organizations, or on special assignment. Many of these workers give definite hours of service week after week. Teachers spend months in preparation, and, after they have been assigned to a class, give the best they have to it. Vacation School teachers give an entire month in summer. Men give days of time together. I call freely on anyone to go on church errands to the far side of Rochester, if necessary. Everyone responds gladly when the opportunity to serve is offered. No one receives a cent for such service, yet everyone takes this work more seriously than he does his own. Here, I am sure, is the real reason why the little country church of ten years ago is succeeding to-day."

The church is evangelistic. But this work is not delegated entirely to the pastor, and professional evangelists are never employed. The members themselves help. As a result of one house-to-house friendly visitation by the laymen, ninety-one

This up-to-date rural church built a $50,000 religious education plant at the rear of the century-old auditorium. It has departmental Sunday School rooms, a dining room, a gymnasium, and a church office.

All work and no play does not keep boys on the farms. A rural pastor builds up his church by building up his community.

people expressed their desire to unite with the Church. Forty-six joined by profession of faith and forty-five by letter from churches of eleven different denominations. Is it any wonder that men and women who are thus loyal to the church and who are willing to help to build a Christian community inspire a like loyalty in others? Think of 338 members working together for the same purpose!

"There are no factions or disputes," says the pastor. "Workers of all shades of theological opinion and of all types and temperaments are equally loyal to the church."

Many people lament the fact that the day is past when the church may become the "social center." Listen to some miscellaneous announcements, selected from among those made in this church from week to week, and judge as to whether a church in these days of automobiles, radios, moving pictures, and state roads can be the center of community life. Here are some of the announcements:

"The rain and cold of Friday and Saturday did not spoil the Annual Workers' Conference."

"The Greece Health Service will hold its regular meeting on Tuesday evening."

"You have good neighbors here in Greece—and the best place to meet and become acquainted with them is at church."

"Trained helpers are in charge every Sunday to care for the babies and small children during church worship and Sunday School."

"At the Sunday School staff conference last Wednesday night 33 officers and teachers sat down to supper."

"About 15 girl scouts passed their tenderfoot tests."

"Boy Scouts, Sunday, February 10."

"Our biggest summer event will be the annual Vacation Church School, July 1 to 26. We hope to have 125 children enrolled."

Can anyone who catches the vision of this church doubt that the church can still be the social center? Can anyone who studies the activities of a church like this be discouraged with the possibilities of the rural church?

"What's right with the rural church?" you ask. "God has given this church," said the pastor, "the definite task of welcoming our new neighbors into a religious community."

The four-page paper published weekly by some of the laymen and sent to over five hundred homes is called the "Greece Community Builder." The name represents the mission of this church, for it is actually building a Christian community. And this is the task of each of our churches.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. The Kingdom of God comes upon the earth as fast as each of our churches builds the spirit of Christ into the heart of our community life.

The Scripture of the Chapter. Jesus was greatly interested in building a Christian community. He talked much about the Kingdom of God. It is mentioned 125 times in the four Gospels. "The kingdom of God is within you," he once said. His parables of the Mustard Seed and the Leaven in the Scripture for this chapter he used to show how quietly but surely the Kingdom grows. The growing influence of the churches mentioned in this chapter also illustrates the growth of the Kingdom. Members of the group will be able to give other similar illustrations.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is the church in your community exerting more or less influence than formerly? Explain the reason for your answer.
2. Two churches in a rural village held an historical exhibit lasting two days, at which were shown antique furniture, age-worn documents, and other interesting old objects. The county Four-H Club agent was unable to get leaders from either of these churches to take charge of a boys' and of a girls' club. Without condemning these churches too severely, what do you think is the matter with them?
3. A pastor once preached a sermon on the topic, "Vote as You Pray." The next day the editor of the paper criticized the pastor and advised him to stick to the old-time gospel. Which of the two men was right?
4. Do the young people usually go out of this community for their good times?
5. A young men's Sunday School class asked for the use of one of the social rooms of the church for games. The session feared that the boys would knock the plaster off the walls and advised them to go build a hall. The boys became displeased and gradually left the church. If you had been an elder in that church how would you have received this request?
6. A Michigan layman came to his pastor one day and said, "I wish we had a class in our church in which we could study the application of Christian principles to modern rural problems." If you had been the teacher of that class, what subjects would you have taken up for discussion? Give some examples.

SOMETHING TO DO

1. A suggested debate: "Resolved: That the Church is Exerting More Influence in This Community than Formerly."

2. The churches described in this lesson carried out a number of successful projects. A few of them are listed below. Place a check mark in front of any of them needed in your community:

A Vacation Church School.
Week-day religious education classes.
A joint picnic for the immigrant farmers and the old American stock.
A house-to-house friendly church visitation.
The building of a religious education plant.
Basketball and baseball teams for young people.
Boy and Girl Scouts.
Regular Sunday School staff meetings.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"Tested Methods in Town and Country Churches," by Brunner, 173 pages. Doran, $1.25. Stories of forty successful churches.

"The National Influence of a Single Farm Community," by Hoag, 55 pages. U. S. Dept. of Agriculture Bulletin No. 984. Tells what one community contributed to the nation. Sent free upon request.

CHAPTER VIII

BUILDING A CHRISTIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

The Gist of the Chapter. Many things which the Church has started have later been taken over by the county or state and supported by taxes. Colleges were originally built only by the Church. Now we have great tax-supported universities, also. Charity or poor relief has always been a part of the program of the Christian Church. Now we have county welfare commissioners who care for our county's poor and charge the expense to the tax budget. Fifty years ago practically all our churches contained libraries. Now village and county libraries, supported by taxes, provide the people's reading. Formerly Church folk gave much time to "sitting up" with the sick. Our county health departments, with a physician and his deputies, our public-health nurses, and our county and city hospitals, have radically changed this practice. The supervision of health, schools, libraries, poor relief, widows' pensions, and dependent children is now primarily the work of tax-supported agencies.

Some Church people regret this change. They are jealous for the Church and sometimes feel that her great influence is declining. Others feel that the chief task of the Church is to put into the hearts of the people who pay the taxes and manage the town, the county, and the state governments this kind of humanitarian service so that such work will be carried on efficiently. This chapter is concerned with the place of the Church and Church people in local government.

The Scripture

And he spake also a parable unto them, Can the blind guide the blind? shall they not both fall into a pit? The disciple is not above his teacher: but every one when he is perfected shall be as his teacher.

—*Luke 6:39, 40.*

For there is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit; nor again a corrupt tree that bringeth forth good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit. For of thorns men do not gather figs, nor of a bramble bush gather they grapes. The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth that which is evil: for out of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh.

And why call ye me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things which I say? Every one that cometh unto me, and heareth my words, and doeth them, I will show you to whom he is like: he is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock: and when a flood arose, the stream brake against that house, and could not shake it: because it had been well builded. But he that heareth, and doeth not, is like a man that built a house upon the earth without a foundation; against which the stream brake, and straightway it fell in; and the ruin of that house was great.

—*Luke 6:43-49.*

THE BIBLE LESSON IN PRACTICE

The church has the great opportunity and important task of putting into the hearts of men the attitude for service and the standard for integrity that make efficient public citizens and officers. An ignorant and inefficient official in a place of public trust is like a blind man leading the blind.

After years of training and association in a church, a man may be suddenly thrust into public office. He may make mistakes and forsake the trust put upon him, but as a rule a man in such a position is honest, dependable, and willing to spend himself in service for others. "There is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit." We expect the church to turn out men of integrity.

Men who champion great humanitarian movements, great public causes for relieving poverty, sickness, delinquency, or ignorance, are usually those who Sunday after Sunday in their Sunday School class or other church service have proclaimed these same principles of unselfish service. The Church literally builds character on rocklike foundations. Jesus says that we must not only hear his words, but we must obey.

Let us study some local officials and some governmental agencies and watch for the two types.

In a certain county were three county superintendents of the poor who were given their offices simply as political re-

wards. They were apparently without any ability or desire to be of service. All of them were aged farmers. One died during his two-year term. The next soon became bedridden and mechanically signed orders for the administration of $20,000 for poor relief from his sick bed. Tax money was wasted. The needy were treated poorly by these inefficient officeholders. "Can the blind guide the blind?"

In another county in the same state a man of great integrity and with a desire to be of service became superintendent of the poor. He found that there was an old almshouse in the county. He also discovered a lack of healthful work for the inmates and a trail of graft in the purchase of supplies. In two years' time he had introduced the keeping of systematic records; he provided a careful health program for the county's poor; he weeded out mental defectives and put them in proper institutions; during the first year he saved his county $18,000 in purchasing supplies and $17,000 by his intelligent handling of the dependent children. "For there is no good tree that bringeth forth corrupt fruit; nor again a corrupt tree that bringeth forth good fruit. For each tree is known by its own fruit."

A public-spirited doctor in Framingham, Massachusetts, decided to see what he could do to stop tuberculosis. For five years he kept telling people how to prevent this dread disease. He gave thorough medical examinations, discovered cases in the early stages, and cared for them. The public-health nurse visited in the homes to carry out the instructions of this health officer. As a result of his five years of effort only one third as many as previously fell victims to this disease. The sound health education of this man who knew his work reduced tuberculosis and brought health. His small New England city reaped the fruit of his unselfish and humanitarian work. "The good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good."

"Why did you run for the office of justice of the peace in your township? You are too busy a farmer to give your time to that office for the meager fees you receive." This remark was made to a certain officeholder. He readily admitted that according to the county road map an improved road would probably not have been built in front of his farm for ten years, and he wanted a new road.

"You see, when I became justice of the peace," he explained, "I was given a vote in the town board; so by proper trading of votes I got the road built past my house within a year."

He was elected to dispense justice. He traded votes! He changed the road plan of the best judgment of the engineers! He bought a road with his office of justice! All in one year! For nine years he has continued in this office. Let us hope that we do not have many officials with similar motives.

An Iowa farm boy of godly parentage who worked his way through Leland Stanford Jr. University and by prodigious efforts reached the peak of success in the field of engineering, threw his energies into the greatest humanitarian peace program of all time when he found the opportunity. The son of a devout Quaker preacher could hardly do otherwise. A boy reared by godly parents, brought up under the influence of a Church free from selfish ambitions, "is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock: and when a flood arose, the stream brake against that house, and could not shake it: because it had been well builded."

FROM THE CHURCH TO THE COURTHOUSE

A hundred years ago a man walked into a little village with his tool box on his shoulder and began his life's career as a mechanic, an inventor, and later a philanthropist. One of his gifts to his native town was a library building. Good men acted as trustees in watching over this man's gift for sixty years, until finally the city as a whole stood up and asked to support this institution and make it a public library.

Nearly every library in the United States has gone through this development, which changed it from a private or association library to a public, tax-supported institution. It is the trend which most institutions take.

A woman in charge of a county W.C.T.U. committee began to lend out books to the rural schools. The plan was well received, and grew. Finally her county voted to support a trained librarian to go about over the county with a book truck. The small lending library grew into a tax-supported public library. We now have 275 such county libraries in

the United States. The small private library is gradually giving way to the county-wide tax-supported institution.

Several years ago a down-town church in Boston started a playground for the purpose of keeping boys and girls from tenement homes off the hot and dirty streets. Later other churches started Vacation Church Schools. "Busy work" was the main feature of these schools at first. Hammocks, bird houses, baskets, and many other articles were made. Games were played and songs were learned. The idea was successful and grew. City governments adopted the plan and began

This truck, loaded with five hundred books, makes its daily rounds to rural homes and district schools.

to build playgrounds and employ supervisors of play. Last year 12,000 such playgrounds and indoor recreation centers were in operation. Churches have built parish houses or social halls for indoor recreation. Cities have recently adopted this plan also. Over 400 recreation halls have been built and are cared for by public taxes. Last summer $31,740,851 was spent on playground supervision, 90 per cent of which came from taxes.

Deaconesses in the name of the Church initiated family case work and went from home to home on errands of mercy and help. Now county agents for dependent children, child-

welfare workers, and probation officers are found in nearly every county.

The church initiates projects and experiments with them, and when they have proved their worth the county or city government takes them over and pays for them with taxes. The road of progress is from the church to the courthouse. The Church initiates; the State later takes over the project.

Several years ago Dr. Warren H. Wilson, superintendent of country church work of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, went everywhere encouraging rural churches to hold what were then called "country life institutes," for the purpose of improving agriculture and social conditions in the country. Later the Smith-Lever Act was passed, providing huge funds with which state colleges of agriculture might carry on extension work. Such institutes then became an important feature of this agricultural extension program. The first rural life surveys were made under Dr. Wilson's supervision; they are now a common practice of county agents. Hospitals were originally built by the Church. Now they are increasingly supported by taxes.

TAX-SUPPORTED RIGHTEOUSNESS

How can a Christian local government be built? It must be built by the election to office of Christian men of integrity and training.

The assistant in a county treasurer's office was asked one day where the treasurer was. She said that she did not know.

"When will he return?"

"I do not know that."

"How long since he has been here?"

"Six months."

"Does he draw his salary?"

"Oh, yes, his salary and his fees."

"How much a year?"

"Perhaps $5,000 a year."

This agricultural county was small and in debt. The people wanted a Four-H Club agent for the 3,000 farm boys and girls and a home demonstration agent for the 2,000 farm women, but the supervisors said that the county could not afford this extra expense. The $5,000 that was given each year to the

county treasurer as a political reward would have provided for both of these county agents. A good, respected, and honest Christian layman, willing to enter the political arena and become a candidate for treasurer, is what this county needs.

States have laws which prohibit a township or county supervisor or commissioner from employing members of his immediate family and paying them with government funds. Of course, he cannot as a supervisor employ himself and thus collect extra money. A certain supervisor, however, employs his own teams for road work in his own township. When he draws the warrant to pay himself he makes the check payable to some relative or friend who, of course, returns the money. What does this township need? Obviously it needs some one with less selfish motives who is willing to enter local politics and abolish such practices.

One county that cannot afford to employ a second public-health nurse is now paying $7,000 a year to a county treasurer who is seldom in the treasurer's office because of his other business. This county's tax money is also used to pay an assistant who does this treasurer's work. In addition, an auditor is employed, and a purchasing agent, so that the salaries for this one function of this county's government total $15,000. One efficient treasurer in similar counties does all of this work at a salary of $5,000. The $10,000 which is thus wasted would employ four public-health nurses in place of the one now employed.

In another case the county supervisor, a man of great integrity, chairman of the Appropriations Committee and thereby responsible for the county's budget, patiently gives his time to carry on the work of his local government. He handles the county tax money as faithfully as he cares for the benevolences in his Presbyterian church. He is quietly putting Christian principles into his local government and the fear of God into the entire county.

A CHRISTIAN'S DUTY IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Everywhere Church people can find opportunities to carry out the principles of the Church in local and county government.

"I am not going to be school trustee in this district another year," said a farmer resentfully when he heard that some one had criticized his administration of the school. So he resigned. The next Sunday in church, with bowed head, he may have thoughtlessly repeated once again the words of that great prayer, "Thy kingdom come."

Let us see on what great opportunity for bringing in that Kingdom he had just turned his back. The school of which he had been trustee was filled with the children of foreign-speaking parents. Suppose he had stayed at his post. He could have introduced into these foreign-speaking homes, through the children, books and health, recreation and religion, better farming methods through the Four-H Club, better home-making through the girls' club, cleanliness, music, beauty, community pride, and many other things that these newly immigrated farm people needed. One way a Christian can help his local government is by being a good school trustee in his community.

A county that once had had a Four-H Club was trying to get the work started again. The county Farm Bureau had taken action urging such a procedure. The Pomona Grange discussed the matter and although the members felt the burden of the mounting taxes they decided that the welfare of the farm boys and girls should have first consideration. So they voted affirmatively on the motion, petitioning the supervisors to employ an agent for this junior project work. A committee was appointed from the Grange to carry out this resolution; the chairman of this committee went to the supervisors with the request, and it was voted down. He then carried on a campaign for public support of his plan until finally the county bankers' association came to his aid and helped him to secure a county agent for the farm youth. Later the supervisors voted the appropriation.

This splendid campaign, after the cause apparently had been lost, was the result of the effort of one layman and officer in a village church to build a better county for the on-coming generation of farm youth. "He is like a man building a house, who digged and went deep, and laid a foundation upon the rock."

BUILDING A CHRISTIAN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

Many a man would be willing to give his time to his local government if he knew that he could render real service by doing so. Then what is needed most in our local government? The principal need is to direct the tax expenditures into new channels. For example, one county spends $1,800 a year on a public-health nurse, but $88,000 a year on maintaining its tuberculosis hospital. If a few more nurses were employed for health education it is probable that half the money now spent on the hospital could be saved, as well as many lives.

Another county spends $40,000 a year on its county poor farm, but has no vocational agriculture in its schools to keep people from becoming poor.

Ignorance, delinquency, and crime are expensive. Education, organizations for youth, and right living cost less and go farther. A poor agricultural county recently felt that it must give up its county director of religious education because of insufficient funds. She was a young, trained college girl that cost the county only $1,500 a year. But before the year was over the same county had spent in taxes over $10,000 on one murder trial. We need some Christian "bandits" who will by educational persuasion capture thousands of dollars of taxes that are now being spent in our local communities on crime and turn this money into keeping boys from taking the downward road. Jesus kept teaching the worth of the individual. The Christian way in local government is to carry out this principle of saving the individual. The prevention of sickness, or health education, is a better expenditure of money than the spending of huge sums on hospitals and orphan asylums. It is far better to spend money on religious education than on reform schools or jails.

Fargo, North Dakota, reported that the number of its deaths from typhoid was decreased one fifth and those from diphtheria one sixth in five years. The reduction in the infant mortality rate for that period was 42 per cent. Cattaraugus County, New York, in seven years has reduced its infant mortality rate 40 per cent. One seventh of our population is in school. But physicians who examined the children in fifty schools in one county last year said that not a single parent showed enough interest in this medical examination at school

to attend. Here is an opportunity for the Christian in local government. Prevention of sickness is cheaper than hospital bills. Health can be bought.

Likewise the prevention of delinquency by clubs and classes for youth, by Scouting and Four-H Clubs, and by playgrounds and parish houses, is better than the maintenance of reform schools and "industrial homes." The average per capita cost of organized public recreation in 402 cities in the United States and Canada last year was 57 cents. But it costs over $700 a year to keep a boy or girl in a reform school. It is better to spend the 57 cents or more and save the $700 as well as the boy or girl. Right living is cheaper than vice and crime. Here, then, is the task of the Christian in his local government: to use the rope with which we have been hanging criminals to make swings for our school playgrounds; to use the stone and mortar of our jails to build gymnasiums and parish houses; to use more of our taxes and more of our government agencies for character development and right living.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. The Church is training men and women with integrity of purpose and with a spirit of service, who are putting these Christian principles into practice in our local and county government.

The Scripture of the Chapter. Recall the present officers in your community or county, such as teacher or school officer, county commissioner, public-health nurse, sheriff, judge of the children's court, public welfare commissioner, and others. With these in mind read over again the Bible passage in this chapter and try to see how Christian values determine the efficiency of these officers.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

Mark with a cross thus [x] anything you think is needed in this community. Give your reasons for your decision.

☐ A county rural traveling library, a book truck with a trained librarian taking books out to rural schools, Granges, stores, and homes in much the same way as the rural mail carrier goes.

☐ Better enforcement of the Eighteenth Amendment.

☐ More careful medical examinations of the children in the schools, with parents following up the examination.

☐ A health clinic for mothers and babies for the purpose of teaching the proper feeding and care of babies.

☐ An examination of the water in the school wells.
☐ A toxin-antitoxin clinic for the prevention of diphtheria.
☐ The building of a school playground.
☐ The organization of Pioneers or Scouts for boys and girls.
☐ Four-H Clubs for boys and girls.
☐ A Vacation Church School.
☐ Better county government officials.
☐ Hot lunch at school.
☐ A county child-welfare agent.
☐ The free use of the church building for Farm Bureau meetings, health clinics, or meetings of the coöperative association.
☐ A talk before an adult Sunday School class by the county judge or some other official on the various county offices and their functions.
☐ A talk before an adult Sunday School class on the county's budget or how our taxes are spent.
☐ A talk before an adult Sunday School class by the judge of the juvenile court on how to prevent crime.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"County and Township Government in the United States," by Porter, 340 pages. Macmillan, $2.25. A helpful book for one who wishes to improve local government.

"A Christian Program for the Rural Community," by Butterfield, 130 pages. Cokesbury Press, $1.50. The Christian viewpoint in rural life problems.

CHAPTER IX

THE CHURCH'S MINISTRY TO THE COMMUNITY

The Gist of the Chapter. The followers of Jesus, when they catch his spirit, seek to give instead of to get. They give their time, their money, their prayers. In fact, the people who compose our Christian churches make this matter of service their principal concern. We call this the church's ministry to the community.

This ministry might be the providing of wholesome social life. Many churches build a social hall or a parish house in which the community's social activities are housed. Some churches invite the health officer and public nurse to conduct a clinic in the church. Probably three fourths of the Scout troops are under church auspices. Farm Bureau meetings are often held in church buildings. It is this attitude of the church of giving instead of getting, of serving instead of being served, with which we are concerned in this chapter.

As you read the following words of Jesus, note how he emphasized this spirit of service in all his teaching.

The Scripture

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
Because he anointed me to preach good tidings to the poor:
He hath sent me to proclaim release to the captives,
And recovering of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty them that are bruised.

—*Luke 4:18.*

But Jesus said, Forbid him not: for there is no man who shall do a mighty work in my name, and be able quickly to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us. For whosoever shall give you a cup of water to drink, because ye are Christ's, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward.

—*Mark 9:39-41.*

And he sat down, and called the twelve; and he saith unto them, If any man would be first, he shall be last of all, and servant of all.

—*Mark 9:35.*

This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends.

—*John 15:12, 13.*

A RURAL MUSICAL FESTIVAL

As we study the activities of some rural churches, let us try to see how they undertook to minister to their communities. We may discover that they, with many other churches, are trying to put into practice the teachings of Jesus enumerated above.

A rural pastor one day began to feel keenly the lack of good music among his people. In his village he constantly heard the commercialized songs, "the very latest." He first visited a dozen or more rural schools to test farm children and found a great lack of musical appreciation. Many knew only one or two worth-while songs. He decided to do something about it. He felt that the church had a ministry to perform to the community in leading the people to an appreciation of worth-while music. This was the beginning of an annual rural musical festival, which gradually changed the attitude towards music of an entire county.

The pastor first visited each of the fourteen rural schools in his township and asked the pupils if they would take part in a musical festival if he would train them for it. They were eager to try. The fifteen schools of the adjoining township wanted to take part, too. During the first year of this festival, two townships were entered. During the second year, schools from the whole county came in. The minister also arranged a second class of competitors, the rural Sunday Schools. Entries from the whole county were received in this class. His third group was rural church choirs. The second year of the festival he added two other groups, village day schools and village church choirs.

The rural schools or one-teacher schools, the village schools, the Sunday Schools, the rural churches, and the village

Churches that plan worth-while things for people to do together create the friendly spirit which makes the community.

A small rural church in the dry-farming section of Colorado has discovered the value of pageantry for training leaders.

churches comprised the five different classes. Each class had its "test piece" which each group in that class sang. Each group also sang one additional song of the members' own choosing. The test pieces were worth-while songs, hymns, and selections from oratorios. The merchants became interested and offered cash prizes which were given with the understanding that the money received should be spent for some community enterprise.

The improvement in singing, and especially the changed attitude towards music, in this county has been of great significance. At the time of the first festival 1,000 people came to the little village church, and the second year 1,500 attended. The festival began at nine-thirty in the morning and continued until ten in the evening.

In addition to the singing there was a music appreciation event. The titles of thirty well-selected numbers were sent in advance to schools and churches throughout the county. These were played at the festival and as many as wished entered this music memory contest, writing the name of the piece as it was played. Some knew every one of these great musical classics and many knew most of them. In addition to the music there was also a story-telling contest. Bible stories or other character stories were told. Sixty-eight children took part in this. In most cases they had won in similar contests in their local schools and in township meets. Hundreds thus received training in story-telling.

The day, of course, was one of great inspiration. Good music and story-telling were given a new place in the thinking of the 40,000 people in that county. The project was one in which all nationalities, religions, and social classes could meet. The old-stock Americans seemed especially pleased when a school composed entirely of the children of European immigrants won the second place. A group of Bohemian Catholics was next in order. It was discovered later that the girl who won first place in the story-telling was an orphan girl being cared for by the Red Cross. But all were on the same high level in the presence of good music and classic stories.

Is not this little rural church meeting the standard laid down by Jesus? It is ministering not only to its community but to the entire county in a very worth-while way. It has

lifted not only the musical standard but the cultural ideals of a whole county in many other ways. Was it not to this type of ministry that Jesus referred when he asked his followers to be servants of all?

Let us study another similar church enterprise in order to observe the way in which this spirit of ministering to a community actually works out.

A SOCIAL AND DRAMATIC CLUB

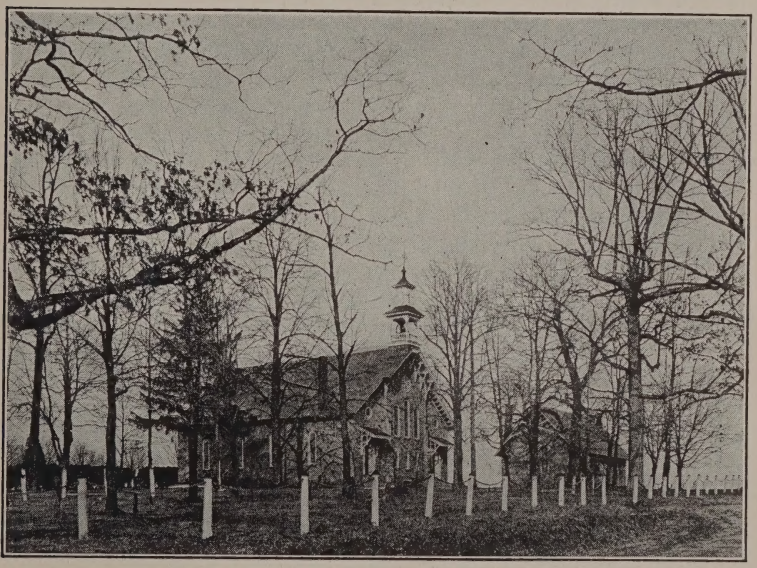
Seven miles out on a macadam road from a city of 20,000 is an agricultural community of scattered homes, the center of which is Morris Chapel. This name stands for the church organization, for the building in which the congregation meets, and for the community. It is a church-centered community. There has been no other attraction, no store, no garage, not even a filling station. For years the church and community have held their own, partly because of this fact of no counter-attractions.

Seven years ago agriculture started on a rapid decline here and it has not swung back to normal since. At that time three out of the fifty men in this community drove into the city each morning to work and forty-seven stayed on the farm. Now with the passing of seven years the ratio has changed. Only three make their entire living by farming. Each morning as the automobiles leave for the city, the owners leave behind not only their farms but their interest in farming, their loyalty to the little neighborhood, and worst of all their interest in the local community life. But this is where the church stepped in.

A young pastor and his adult Sunday School class began to talk about a social and dramatic club. They felt that dramatics would give opportunity for self-expression which would hold the people's interest, that they would be brought together in a social way for their rehearsals, that local pride would be developed. For these reasons the project offered great social and educational advantages. So they organized the Morris Chapel Social and Dramatic Club, which has since grown to a membership of 68.

They had no hall for their plays, no stage, no scenery, no

building but the one-room church. They would have preferred, of course, to use some other room than the church auditorium, but since there was none, the pastor concluded that, although the church was a sacred building, dedicated to worship, the 68 young people were also dedicated to God and were more sacred than the boards and windows in the church. So a stage was constructed that could be moved in and out.



The ministry of this and many another rural church to its community includes dramatics, music, athletics, health clubs and clinics, civic improvements, beautification of grounds, organizations for boys and girls, and a number of other things.

Rods, wires, curtains, and scenery were provided. Probably the building of the stage and the adapting of the building to the new club was as valuable a project as any other.

The club divides the members so that everyone can take part in its activities at some time during the year. A person is always more interested in an organization when he can take part. Four major attractions are planned for each year. An evening's dramatic program here might be a three-act or

a five-act play or it might be a collection of two or three separate one-act plays.

Each new dramatic program, when ready, is first given in the home community. Then for three months, or even a year, the "troop" is ready for engagements in other localities. These outside engagements develop local pride, furnish many good times for the actors, and incidentally bring money into the social and dramatic club treasury.

The money earned in this way has been spent in improving the church building. A dining hall or clubroom has been built and a kitchen added. Shrubs have been planted on the church grounds. The principal value of such a project, of course, cannot easily be described. It lies in the self-development, the educational influence, the wholesome good times, the abundant life of the Morris Chapel people which they would not otherwise have had. This church is ministering to the life of its community in a very practical way.

Writers on rural life usually offer a long list of economic and social changes that are taking place in the country to-day. Fewer people are needed to cultivate the farms because of improved machinery. As the extra families move out they take away the leaders in the rural church. And even if not a single family has moved in or out of a rural community, the radio, the telephone, the rural mail carrier, the centralized high school have all come in. Country people's interests are divided nowadays. Although the economic farm problems cannot be discussed here, it must be said that the great social need in the country is to keep the people thinking together, to keep them social-minded. This the church can do. The Morris Chapel Social and Dramatic Club is doing just this thing, holding the people together in their thinking, in their social standards, in their high social ideals.

WHAT MAKES A COMMUNITY

Scholars have written many helpful books in which they have told us what a community is. They have showed us how to define it, to bound it, to map it, and to survey it. Their rules, however, determine only the structure of the community, the skeleton on which the real community hangs. It is the spirit or attitude of the people toward one another which

really makes a community. If this attitude is one of friendly service, we are then proud of the place. Let us study together one more community, to catch its spirit and to try to understand the motives of its people.

It is called Quakertown. It has a school, a church, a cemetery, and, of course, the scattered homes. A dramatic club here has likewise kept together the neighborly spirit of "homespun" days in a remarkable way.

"You just can't be cross with your next-door neighbor," said one of the members of the Quakertown settlement, "even if his cows do get into your garden and eat all your cabbage, if in the next pageant you are wearing his great-grandmother's wrapper which he dug out of the attic. Neither can you hate some one if his dog did kill your pet rooster, if you are to have a tête-à-tête with him in the next play."

A church changes the hearts of its people by no mysterious formula. Good will cannot be prescribed. It cannot be taught. It must be caught. Church leaders who plan worthwhile things for the community to do together successfully expose the members to this contagious feeling of friendliness.

"We find that the best way to be happy and contented," said one of the Quakertown residents, "is to be busy. We have put on five home-talent plays in the last five years—real plays, for which we have charged admission—and we've had a remarkably good time doing it. We have no neighborhood quarrels or scraps, for we're too busy planning our next entertainment or social."

"It's true that Mrs. Brown may become peeved at Mrs. Green and refuse to speak to her at the Ladies' Aid meeting, but before the meeting is over they are sure to be deep in the mysteries of what is best for an Indian costume or how to make three pumpkin pies with only five eggs to take to the next community supper."

"Of course, we have mortgages, taxes, and all the other evils known to farmers, and we practice a play or have a picnic when we should be hoeing potatoes or planting corn, but if one of us gets too far behind we all pitch in and help him out."

When asked if the moving pictures were hurting the life of Quakertown, one of the residents said with a smile: "We're too busy putting on our own entertainments, our suppers,

plays, and socials, and most of us have four or five small children to care for.

"We don't need any 'Back to the Land' or 'Stay on the Farm' movement. Most of us married the boy next door, and are happy, and contented with farm life."

It is not important that every church have a dramatic club or conduct a rural musical festival. It is important, however, that it have some kind of community service to make people happy and contented, as the farmers are in Quakertown. This is the way in which the church may minister to the community.

MANY SERVICE ACTIVITIES

The ministry of a church to its community includes: dramatics, music, athletics, health clubs and clinics, beautification of public buildings and grounds, civic improvements, organizations for boys and girls, and a number of other things. A certain rural church lists the many types of projects or activities needed in most communities and asks the workers in the church to discuss each one and indicate those which they think should be undertaken in their community. A hollow square is placed in front of each project. As the list is discussed the group marks a cross in the square in front of those things which are needed. The votes are summarized and those projects in which there is general interest compose the service program for the year.

The sheet which this church uses contains the following list of projects:

OUR COMMUNITY

Mark with a cross thus, [x] anything needed in this community:

- ☐ Electric lights.
- ☐ Fire protection.
- ☐ A park.
- ☐ Better law observance.
- ☐ A village water system.
- ☐ Running water in the homes.
- ☐ Better sidewalks.
- ☐ Library facilities.
- ☐ Closer coöperation between farmers and merchants.
- ☐ A Grange hall (or remodeling).
- ☐ A stereopticon for the community.
- ☐ A Vacation Church School.
- ☐ Playground apparatus at school.
- ☐ A baseball diamond.
- ☐ A place for basketball.
- ☐ A community dramatic club.
- ☐ A Hi-Y Club.
- ☐ A Four-H Club for boys.
- ☐ A Four-H Club for girls.
- ☐ Boy Scouts.

☐ A building for a social center.
☐ A community council.
☐ An annual community field day.
☐ Beautification of the school grounds.
☐ Beautification of the church grounds.
☐ Beautification of the Grange hall.
☐ Beautification of the railway station.
☐ Beautification of our homes.
☐ Consolidation of the churches.
☐ Centralization of our school districts.
☐ Girl Scouts.
☐ Camp Fire Girls.
☐ Juvenile Grange.
☐ Better moving pictures.
☐ A father-and-son banquet.
☐ A mother-and-daughter banquet.
☐ Monthly community socials.
☐ An annual musical festival.
☐ A class in home nursing.
☐ Lectures on public health.
☐ A health clinic.
☐ A hot lunch at school.
☐ A toxin-antitoxin clinic.
☐ Week-day religious instruction.

The above list includes 44 definite service projects. This long list is an indication of the many ways in which churches are trying to minister to their communities. "This is my commandment," said Jesus, "that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." The people in the parish are the church's friends for whom it is giving its life. Washington Gladden's hymn summarizes the thought of this chapter:

O Master, let me walk with thee
In lowly paths of service free;
Tell me thy secret; help me bear
The strain of toil, the fret of care.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. The Church is not an organization which lives upon its community. Rather it lives for it. It is not to get what it can, but to give what it is able. It is not a mortgage on the community, but a servant of the community. It thus changes the spirits of men from selfishness to unselfishness; from greed and self-seeking to generosity and giving; from narrowness of vision to breadth of vision; and from sorrow and bitterness to joy and thanksgiving.

The Scripture of the Chapter. It is suggested that each member of the group be asked to give a verse from the Bible which illustrates the spirit of service taught by Jesus.

A LOOK INTO THE LOCAL SITUATION

Use the Australian ballot given above, entitled "Our Community," and mark the projects or activities you think are needed in this community. Use these as the basis for discussion in this class. As a result of this discussion formulate a community program for the church, selecting only those projects which are most practical.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"Adventures in Service," by Felton, 100 pages. Methodist Book Concern, 35 cents. An account of the many ways in which churches are serving.

"The Church at the Center," by Wilson, 98 pages. Missionary Education Movement, 50 cents. A challenge of the church to community service.

"Christ and Country People," by McLaughlin, 159 pages. 50 cents. The place of the church outlined by a successful experienced rural pastor.

CHAPTER X

THE LARGER PARISH

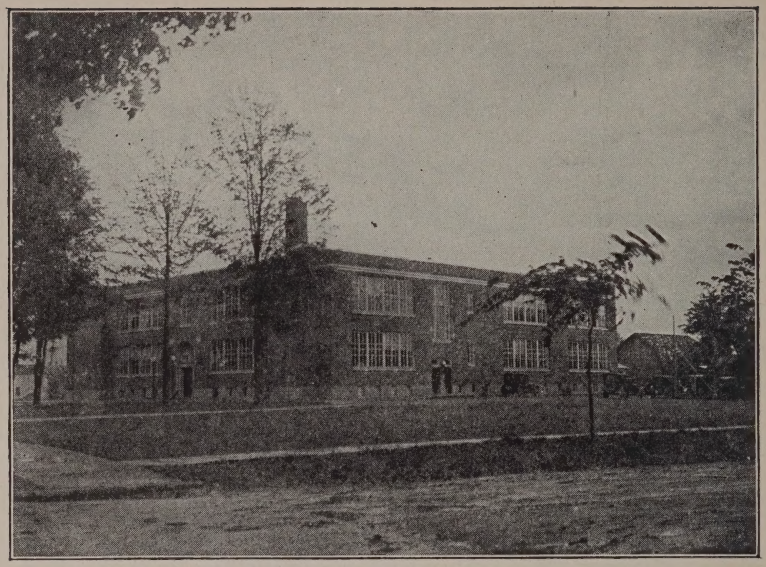
The Gist of the Chapter. One-room schools are being rapidly replaced by modern educational plants. An average of 1,000 new consolidated schools are built each year. The "little red schoolhouse" with its fond memories and time-honored loyalties is passing out of the picture, at the rate of about 4,500 a year.

The little white-spired church by the side of the school is also very dear to our hearts. It, too, was built in pioneer days. Parishes were laid out like school districts, in the days of horses and mud roads. We can travel farther nowadays to school and to church. We demand more highly trained teachers and preachers. We want specialists for everything.

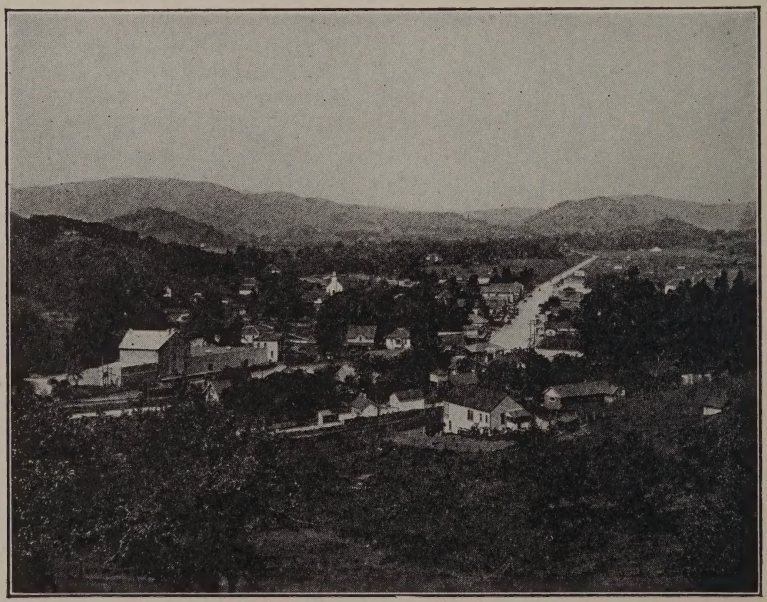
But to get a larger school unit or a larger parish we must break up the old memories. New buildings must be built. New school or parish boundaries must be laid out. It is hard to give up the old sacred church buildings that have meant so much to all of us.

To some it seems easier to let our rural churches decline than to enlarge our old parishes. Others are beginning to feel that the old buildings themselves are not significant, and that our ministry should be to families rather than to churches or to definite locations.

This question of where to worship came up many times in the history of Israel. Naaman, the Syrian from Damascus, took home with him two mule loads of earth from Samaria on which to worship Jehovah, thinking that the God of Israel was associated with the soil of the country. Shiloh, Beth-el, Jerusalem, Samaria, and the various high places in the hill country were each the subject of debate in connection with the question of the place where men ought to worship. The place where we ourselves worship to-day soon becomes for us a sacred place. We accustom ourselves to thinking that God dwells only for us on that altar or in that building. This



The old, pioneer, one-teacher school is giving place to the large centralized school of this kind; likewise the small neighborhood church is giving way to the large, efficient community church.



The village church may be the center of the social and religious life for an area of fifty square miles, if the church leaders are willing to put on a modern church program.

makes it difficult for us to think in terms of a new parish or a different church center.

Jesus, in his visit with the woman of Samaria, said very clearly that the place is not the important thing about worship. "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem . . . but . . . the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth."

The Scripture

The woman saith unto him, Sir, I perceive that thou art a prophet. Our fathers worshipped in this mountain; and ye say, that in Jerusalem is the place where men ought to worship. Jesus saith unto her, Woman, believe me, the hour cometh, when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem shall ye worship the Father. Ye worship that which ye know not: we worship that which we know; for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour cometh, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth: for such doth the Father seek to be his worshippers. God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship in spirit and truth. The woman saith unto him, I know that Messiah cometh (he that is called Christ): when he is come, he will declare unto us all things. Jesus saith unto her, I that speak unto thee am he.

—*John 4:19-26.*

A NORTH CAROLINA PARISH

A governor of North Carolina once had for his campaign slogan, "A Schoolhouse on Every Hill." This was a far-seeing governor. Rural education in North Carolina made rapid strides. But this famous governor could not foresee the problem as it exists to-day. The many rural schools in North Carolina are now being torn down. Each county has a school board that is responsible for a county plan instead of a district plan. The little school districts have almost entirely given place to the larger units of school administration. In one year 219 small districts in this state were replaced; in another year 366 small units were wiped out, and large consolidated schools were built.

A certain county in the South had 72 schools in 1920. In 1929 these had been consolidated into 15 schools. Five districts on an average had been put into one. This arrangement allows the teachers to give more time to each

grade, provides for specialists in many subjects, makes it possible to have better equipment, and gives every farm boy and girl high-school privileges.

In this same southern county, one denomination, the Methodist Episcopal Church, South, had 13 rural churches in 1920. If the same consolidation process in the Church had been carried out that has been noted in the schools, that is, the consolidating of five small units into one large unit, there would have been three large rural Methodist parishes in the county in 1929.

The following table gives the names of the Methodist rural churches in the county referred to above, also the membership of each church, and the estimated present value of the church building:

Name of Church	Membership	Value of Church Building
Beulah	18	$400
Capelsie	14	No building
Philadelphia	3	75
Prospect	12	50
Shiloh	22	75
Zion	58	200
Flint Hill	30	150
Hebron	44	800
Little River	63	600
Ophir	50	400
Sardis	120	400
Wadeville	57	400
Zoar	27	200
13 churches	538	$3,700
Average per church	41	$284

Each one of these churches represents the heroic and sacrificial efforts of ministers and laymen of bygone days. Many older members living here have helped to construct some of these edifices, and in doing so had no other thought than that these churches would meet the religious needs for years to come. A train of hallowed memories clusters around the buildings. Great life decisions have been made at the altars. Weddings, baptisms, and big meetings have taken place within the walls. Up the aisles the faltering footsteps of sorrowing

families have followed their loved ones. Of the 13 churches 7 have cemeteries. At a recent "Home-Coming" at Zion Church, one of the older members made a speech in which he expressed the love and loyalty which each one had for the old church. "Even though our old church has some of its windows broken," said he, "even though the roof does leak, and the building needs paint, and even though gullies are

Nearly all our parishes were laid out, and our churches built, in the days of the horse and buggy. Now the average farmer in America owns a car. This means that the old parish boundaries are too small.

washed out around the church, yet these things are like a mother's wrinkles—they never look ugly to us who love old Zion."

If the business of the church is to conserve the sentiments of its older members, these parishes should not be disturbed. If the church is primarily interested in the backward look of the aged instead of the forward-looking needs of the youth, no one should mention a new parish plan for this county. If the place where we worship is the important thing, then

we had better keep these sacred places where they are. When the woman at the well asked Jesus to decide between two debatable places of worship, he said that the place itself has little to do with worship. "Neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem," said he. The true worshipers will not be restricted to one place of worship, but will worship "in spirit and in truth."

Pioneer churches like pioneer schools must adapt themselves to new conditions, to automobiles and improved roads, to a day of specially trained leaders, and to enlarged units of supervision. Consolidated schools and larger parishes go hand in hand with the needs of this new day.

We are likely to think that because big men have come out of small churches in the past they will continue to do so in the future. Eight ministers have been reared in the 13 churches mentioned above. Ophir has given to Duke University its professor of philosophy. Zion has furnished a man for the Federal Council of Churches. But what is the situation today? Not one of these 13 churches has sent out a minister or other leader in the last fifteen years. Only one of the 13 churches has any organization for young people now; none of them have graded lessons in the Sunday School; none have any organization for juniors. Only 3 of the 13 keep their Sunday Schools going through the winter. The Mission Board has been putting $1,000 a year into the maintenance programs of these churches in order to keep them going.

"Why not consolidate these churches as the schools have been consolidated?" you ask.

The reason is this: The state and county school officials have a very definite program of school consolidation. They have maps, made after careful study, to indicate the different areas, with their trade centers and improved roads. Our church officials of the presbytery and conference have not moved so rapidly with such plans.

At a Methodist Conference, however, of which the Methodist churches in this county are a part, action was taken to discontinue services at the first 6 churches of the group mentioned above and to consolidate the work in 7 churches. The 13 churches which had previously comprised two circuits with two preachers were put into one circuit of 7 churches

with a well-trained and adequately supported minister. It is the plan of this pastor, after a careful study of his field, to map out three larger parishes, and center all his activities in three places, as the high schools are now doing.

FROM SMALL TO LARGE PARISHES

We are all familiar with the old one-district rural school in which one teacher conducted from twenty to thirty classes a day, covering all the subjects of eight grades, with perhaps

Pioneer churches, like pioneer schools, are being discarded because of our quicker transportation. Consolidated schools and large parishes go hand in hand with the needs of the new day.

from one to eight pupils in each grade. Now the consolidated school system has brought about a saving of time and an increase in efficiency for both pupils and teachers. This consolidation movement started back about 1890 in New England. In ten years' time it had spread to Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana. It then moved to the West and the South. A recent

report from Mississippi says that in that state 117,672 pupils attend consolidated schools daily. This means that one out of five of the total school population may have these improved school advantages. A report from Missouri gives the average consolidated district as twenty-six square miles, while Oklahoma reports thirty-four square miles as its average consolidated district.

In the table given on page 110 it was stated that the average value of the rural churches in a certain North Carolina county is $284. The average value of the consolidated rural schools in Oklahoma is $11,375. In Missouri it is $12,000 and in Nebraska $14,800. In 1916 in the United States 203,432 buildings were used for worship. Approximately half of these are rural churches. If the same consolidation movement takes place among the rural churches in the next twenty years that has taken place among the rural schools during the past twenty years, our land will be covered with large parishes, at the center of which will be efficient plants equipped for worship, religious education, and social activities. Only 18 per cent of the school enrollment is attending the one-room schools, according to reports from Arizona, Delaware, Kansas, New Jersey, Louisiana, Maryland, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, North Dakota, Tennessee, Utah, Virginia, and Wisconsin.

Let us see if this same movement from the small to the larger unit has been going on in other institutions besides the school.

LARGER HEALTH UNITS

Back in the days when most of our rural churches were built we had what we called township health officers. They were country doctors, who were paid a small yearly fee for keeping watch over contagious diseases and caring for the vital statistics. In practically all the states nowadays we have the larger and more efficient unit of health supervision. Instead of the country doctor who gave part of his time for the small township units, we now have a county health officer with three or four deputy officers, a sanitarian, a technician in a county laboratory, and several county public-health nurses.

But the organization of these larger health units is comparatively new. In 1914 there were only 3 county health units in the entire United States. In 1929, fifteen years later, there were 467. Of the 88 counties in Ohio, 60 have health departments with full-time health officers. Is not the movement toward larger areas as necessary and as important for churches as in the field of health?

Dr. Matthias Nicoll, Jr., Commissioner of the New York State Department of Health, says of this larger health unit: "To-day, with advanced methods of communication and transportation, a county is no larger than a township was twenty-five years ago. Then the success of the health officer was largely determined by the number of nuisances he investigated and caused to be abated. Now his success is measured by the reduction in the amount of sickness and deaths in his community."

The Church is making the same change in its program. Instead of merely pointing out sin, more time now is given to the development of Christian character. This requires a more highly trained leadership in the Church. Larger units and a specialized ministry go together!

LARGER LIBRARY UNITS

When our present parishes were laid out and our present rural churches were built, small village libraries were erected. Each school and each church also contained a small selection of books. The librarian in many of these small places was a well-meaning local citizen, untrained, who worked for a small salary. In some cases these little libraries were open only one or two afternoons a week.

Ten years ago the county library plan was started, and now there are 275 county libraries in operation. This plan calls for a highly trained librarian instead of the good-intentioned but untrained local citizen. A book truck is used which makes its rounds over the county as regularly as do the rural mail carriers. Ten counties in New Jersey have this plan. Nearly every county in California boasts of its rural traveling library. And so in this field the larger unit of administration is taking the place of the small unit.

LARGER WELFARE UNITS

We used to have a township poor master or overseer of the poor. This official, usually an elderly man and a farmer, would buy groceries or clothes for poor families in case of need. Unemployment or sickness was the usual cause of the needed relief. We now have in a large number of states one county welfare officer who does the work formerly done by the dozen or more poor masters. Instead of doling out a few groceries, this county welfare superintendent is a "case worker." He may give food or clothing in emergency cases, but his plan of work is to find employment for the needy man or to keep his family well. This new principle in poor relief is similar to the others in health and library work; it involves the county unit instead of the township, a full-time trained worker instead of several part-time untrained workers, and preventive or educational work instead of remedial or curative effort. If church administration follows the same principles we shall have larger parishes, a specialized ministry, and more emphasis given to the special field of religious education.

COUNTY UNITS IN SOCIAL WELFARE

Not only in health work, library work, and poor relief has the unit of administration become larger, but in nearly all phases of social welfare. County and state roads supervised by the county superintendent of public highways are taking the place of township dirt roads supervised by the district or town road supervisor. The county sheriff does the work formerly done by many constables. One county judge has largely taken the place of forty or more justices of the peace. The county agricultural agent and the county home demonstrator, the county Four-H Club agent, the county agent for dependent children, the county Scout executive, and others indicate the trend to the larger unit of social welfare work.

The larger unit in schools, or churches, or health, or libraries, or poor relief, or any of the other institutions, is more efficient because the larger unit provides more income and hence a better-trained worker. It allows for better equipment —buildings, automobiles, laboratories, moving pictures, and

literature. It makes it possible for larger groups to get together. Small groups become provincial. Many of our small rural churches are dominated by one person. Minds are sharpened only by contact with other minds. What some of our church elders need most of all is another elder. The larger parish allows for specialists—a pastor, a director of religious education, a young people's superintendent.

THE RURAL PARISH OF THE FUTURE

If the church as an institution keeps abreast with the other social agencies—schools, libraries, health and welfare work—it will mean that we shall have larger parishes and a specialized ministry. One larger parish has an area of ten school districts, an area that was formerly four parishes. Instead of having four poorly paid preachers it now has three well-trained workers, a minister of worship who is chairman of the staff, a minister of education, and a minister of parish activities—all specialists in their respective fields.

Another larger parish covers an area of two hundred square miles. It has five pastors and two directors of religious education. The five pastors each have their own churches for which they are responsible, thirteen in all, but they work together in their evangelistic campaigns. They assist one another in making the every-member canvass. They work out a unified plan of house-to-house visitation or survey. They have one Church paper which goes weekly into every home in the larger parish. One of the five pastors is the editor of this paper; another is the business manager. One of the pastors is the recreational leader for the entire parish. Another is responsible for the music.

The work of the two directors of religious education covers the entire larger parish. Forty-eight week-day religious education classes are conducted in coöperation with the public schools by these directors each week. Vacation Church Schools are held in the thirteen churches each summer. A summer camp on a lake is provided for the farm girls of the parish. An annual rural musical festival is conducted. A Standard training school for Sunday School teachers, a young people's institute, a parents' class, and a Bible story-telling contest are other annual activities which minister to the entire

parish. All the work of the directors of religious education is interdenominational.

Returned missionaries, who bring enthusiasm and inspiration to large city churches, have no time to visit many of the small rural places. But this larger parish is able to get a returned missionary almost any time by uniting the congregations. Because of the larger use made of the parish paper, a better paper can be published. Rural ministers often feel lonely in their work. Unfriendly critics say they are aimless. By working together as a staff in a larger parish each minister spurs the other on to greater activity.

Big projects that could not be undertaken otherwise can be carried through by a united effort. In one larger parish a tendency was noted to let down in church attendance during the summer months. The lakes and glens were too inviting, and a great many families would take a picnic dinner or supper and enjoy this scenery. During July and August the larger parish provided at one of these scenic spots a vesper service, with an average attendance of 1,200 people for each of the nine Sunday afternoons.

A very old and much-used sentence applies to our rural parishes: "United we stand, divided we fall!"

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. There is a general trend toward consolidation or centralization of all rural institutions. One of the ways of meeting present-day conditions in church life is the organization of larger parishes. A larger parish is a coöperative parish, a group of churches coöperating in doing together certain things that can be done better coöperatively than individually, such as the employing of a director of religious education or a director of music, the promoting of a special recreational program, and various types of community work. As we unite around common needs we are led later to unite around common creeds. This plan eventually leads to giving up the small parishes of pioneer days and substituting larger parishes in their places.

The Scripture of the Chapter. Jesus always suggested new and better ways to the Church leaders of his day. He called attention to the worth of the individual as compared with that of the institution. In the Scripture for the chapter we learn that the spirit in which we worship, and not the place, is the important thing. He who sent his disciples out across the hills to teach will lead his Church to-day into an expanding ministry.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Is the automobile a hindrance or a help to church attendance? Why do you think so? What can we do about it?
2. What effect has improved farm machinery, such as trucks, tractors, and milking machines, had upon the country churches by increasing or decreasing rural population?
3. Do you think consolidation of schools, coöperative marketing associations, the Farm and Home Bureau, and the Grange have had any effect upon the farmer's attitude towards the competition of two or more churches in the same community? If so, what effect? Have these organizations given us a community-wide viewpoint, rather than a divisive spirit?
4. Do you think the radio, the telephone, rural free delivery, and the automobile have a tendency to make people think of their church as "behind the times"? Or will these things be more apt to lead farmers to improve their church program?
5. In rural America there is one church for every 463 individuals. The membership of these churches is only 20 per cent of the population. Which is our greater need: (*a*) more churches? (*b*) to have the existing churches extend their influence? (*c*) to have fewer but bigger and better churches?
6. The neighborhood church and the district school were established before the automobile and the state roads, when transportation was slow and more people lived in the country. Do you think it advisable now to unite some of our small churches? If so, how can this be done?
7. Would you like a larger parish organized in your community?

A LOOK INTO THE LOCAL SITUATION

1. Enumerate the agencies or institutions in your county which have changed from smaller to larger units of administration during the last twenty-five years (i.e., schools, roads, health and welfare work, and so forth).
2. Draw a map of a suggested larger parish in your section of the county.
3. Outline a plan of administration for this suggested larger parish, including the minister of worship, the minister of music, the minister of religious education, or whatever staff you think would be needed.
4. Discuss this proposed larger parish plan at some future meeting.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"The Larger Parish Plan," by Dana, 22 pages. Congregational Home Missionary Society, 15 cents. A history of the larger parish movement and a statement of principles.

"The Church and the Agricultural Crisis," by Brunner, 48 pages. Pilgrim Press, 35 cents. Tells about the recent economic changes in agriculture as related to the Church.

CHAPTER XI

THE CITY CHURCH AND THE FARMER

The Gist of the Chapter. A men's Sunday School class in a certain city went out one evening to a rural church for supper. The class members enjoyed the meal and were glad for this opportunity of helping with the finances of a small, weak church. The city minister who went along was surprised and pleased to see the great friendliness which existed between his members and the men in this farming community. They even called each other by their first names. He understood the situation, however, when his members told him that many of them were reared out in that rural community. It was later discovered that more men from that rural church had moved to town than had been left behind. This city church of 1,560 members is made up largely of people who have moved in from the 24 rural churches of its denomination in that county. Men and women who are trained in rural churches and move to town have an obligation to the rural church, which will be discussed in this lesson.

Jesus began and ended his ministry by sending out people to spread his message. He told his twelve disciples to leave all and follow him in his preaching missions. After his death they went in every direction establishing churches. Early in his ministry he sent out seventy laymen into every place "whither he himself was about to come." His last words again urged his followers to spread out from Jerusalem, throughout Judea and as far as possible, as his witnesses.

How easy it is for a strong and growing city church to forget its obligation to its neighboring rural communities! In this lesson examples will be given of city churches that have assumed this obligation and are carrying on such an extension program. As you read over the Scripture for this chapter, see if this same spirit of witnessing is manifested by the churches you know.

The Scripture

Now after these things the Lord appointed seventy others, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself was about to come. And he said unto them, The harvest indeed is plenteous, but the laborers are few: pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he send forth laborers into his harvest. Go your ways; behold, I send you forth as lambs in the midst of wolves. Carry no purse, no wallet, no shoes; and salute no man on the way.

—Luke 10:1-4.

But ye shall receive power, when the Holy Spirit is come upon you: and ye shall be my witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judæa and Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth.

—Acts 1:8.

AUTOMOBILE, TRACTOR, AND CHURCH

One day while driving over a fourteen-mile hill with a farmer friend the subject of his boyhood days in his home community came up for discussion.

"When my father went to that school across the road," he explained, "it had forty pupils.

"There were only twenty when I went there. Now, there are only seven.

"When I was a boy," he continued, "there were seven families living on the two-hundred-acre farm that I am now tending alone."

"How many were out to church yesterday?" he was asked.

"There were twenty-six at Sunday School. Usually they all stay for church. The Presbyterians probably had about the same number—maybe a few more grown-ups."

"How many people used to go to these two churches, when you were a boy?" he was asked.

"About two hundred to each church. Think of it! I don't know what our rural churches in this country are coming to," he added with concern.

I wonder if his church isn't simply keeping step with his rural school and his two-hundred-acre farm.

On the writer's boyhood farm there used to be a hired man. He and his wife and children went to Sunday School. Now the hired man is a tractor and it has no wife and children and those seats in the church are empty. When a truck, a hay

loader, a four-horse cultivator, and a gang plow were purchased, it was possible to cultivate the adjoining farm along with the old home place. So the neighbor and his family moved to town.

There is a net loss on the farms by this moving process of 900,000 people a year. The 710,000 births each year in the country are cut down by the 288,000 deaths, leaving a natural increase of 422,000 a year. But this increase is too small to

A strong city church is providing a trained director of religious education for a rural area in its county of one hundred square miles. This is one of the seven rural churches served by this director.

overcome the exodus towards the city. Taking all these things into consideration, there is a net decrease in population on the farms of 478,000 per year.

The best statistics obtainable say that 25 per cent of these movers, or 119,500, are Church members. The city pastors are naturally glad to welcome these 119,500 new members each year. Such an annual influx is encouraging to the city churches. But what about the rural parishes they are leaving?

This means that the total membership of 1,500 churches literally packs up and moves to town each year. In other words, each day between sunrise and sunset the entire membership of four rural churches moves out and leaves four rural church buildings empty.

Of course not all move from the same parishes. It would be simpler if they did. Instead, they weaken every church. Why do not the city churches, made up as they are of rural-trained members, have an obligation to the churches out there in the country? Why do not the farm folks who have moved to town have a debt to pay to the churches that gave them their first training?

It is estimated that when a boy reaches the age of twenty years he has cost some one—the State, the school district, the Church, his parents—a total of $6,000. Few young men would assume that they need not pay back this obligation, to the State, the school, the Church, or their parents. Likewise, these city church members have a financial obligation to the church back home that gave them their early training.

FARM FINANCES

The first paragraph of this chapter mentioned a city church of 1,560 members. It also stated that there are 24 rural churches of the same denomination in that county.

"Why do these 24 rural churches need the help of this large city church?" you ask.

Because they are too small now to carry on efficient work alone. The combined membership of their 24 congregations is 1,570, as over against 1,560 members in the one city church.

The 1,560 city members pay one minister, keep one roof in repair, heat one furnace, and employ one janitor. The 1,570 rural members must support 13 pastors instead of one, and heat and repair 24 church buildings instead of one. It is as cold out in the country as in town; the coal costs just as much. The families of the 13 rural pastors need the same care and comforts as the one family in town. It costs the same to send a daughter through college whether she comes from a rural or a city manse.

Farm people are not asking for special privileges. They ask for equal opportunities. If city churches accept this doc-

trine of equal opportunities it will mean that they will give greater financial aid to their neighboring rural parishes.

Agriculture to-day receives only 10 per cent of the total income of the nation. It received 20 per cent ten years ago.

Farm taxes have increased two and one half times in the past ten years. We must pay our taxes first. It now takes from one quarter to one half of a farmer's net income to pay his taxes. His net income means the rent money his farm brings in after the repairs and operating expenses are paid. From two to ten times as large a proportion of the farmer's net income goes for taxes as the city man pays of his net income. It is not strange that we hear everywhere a demand for "farm relief."

There are nine times as many farm bankruptcies per year now as there were fifteen years ago. Because of increased interest payments on farm mortgages, increased taxes, and the discrepancy between farm prices, retail prices, and the cost of living, each food-producing farm has transferred on an average $3,000 worth of wealth from country to city during the past ten years. Does it not seem fair and reasonable to expect the city church to carry a larger share of the financial responsibility for its neighboring rural churches?

PUTTING THE SERVE IN SERVICE CLUBS

A city Kiwanis Club recently asked its agricultural committee to bring in a report regarding some worth-while projects the club might undertake in rural parts of the county. The committee came back with a report asking that some of the talented members go out upon request to the rural schoolhouses and give concerts, the proceeds of which would be used for buying school playground equipment. This plan was not very well received by the farm people.

"We don't want any city people coming out doing missionary work for us," they said. And they were probably correct. The better plan might have been to readjust the school taxes in such a way that the rural trustees could buy their own equipment.

This committee next proposed the establishment of a public county library, the purchase of a book truck, and the employ-

ment of a trained librarian who would take the books out to the people just as the rural carriers go out daily with their mail. This appealed to the farmers as a way of equalizing reading opportunities.

Kiwanis Clubs throughout the country, as well as Rotary, Exchange, Lions, and other service clubs are interested in working out worth-while projects which will equalize the social and economic welfare of country and city. The city church that planted this mustard seed of "service" in the hearts of club members throughout the nation, must also work out plans for successful city-rural church coöperation.

CITY-RURAL CHURCH COÖPERATION

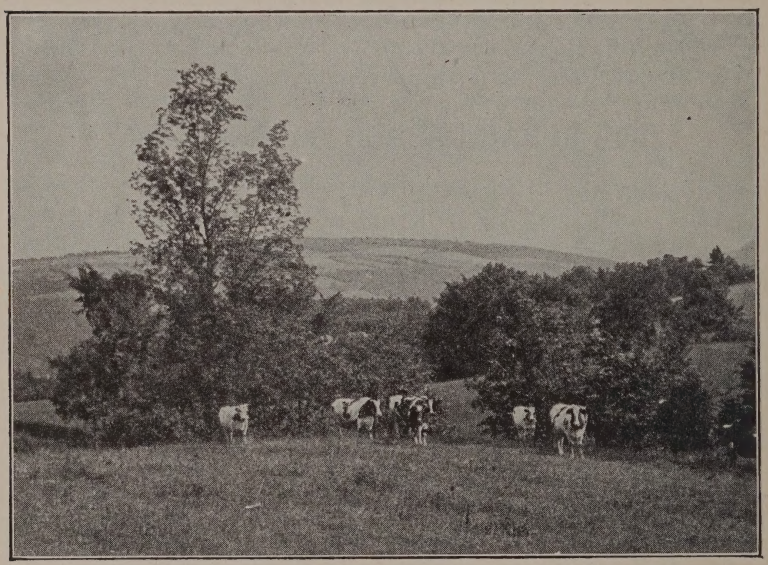
A certain city of 20,000 people with four large Protestant churches undertook to work out a plan whereby the 4,000 farm boys and girls in the county could have equal opportunities for religious education with the boys and girls in the city. Various experiments had previously been tried. Laymen had gone out to speak occasionally. This was a splendid indication of interest and friendliness but was of little permanent value. Pastors went out at spare intervals, but these times were all too seldom. Besides, "preaching" was the one religious service these people already had, whereas they needed an educational program for their youth.

The first step in getting this city-rural program started was to make a study of the religious situation in the county. Visits were made to 186 farm homes, by which it was discovered that 7 out of 10 of the farm children were not receiving any religious instruction. In the first rural school visited there were 18 pupils, none of whom were in Sunday School. In 5 successive schools there were 75 children, only 7 of whom, or 1 in 11, were then regularly enrolled in Sunday School. During the five years previous to this survey the rural churches of the county had lost one ninth of their total membership. In three years of this period church members equal to the total membership of five average country churches had completely disappeared. Something needed to be done. All agreed that the best place to begin was with the boys and girls.

One of the city churches discussed the question and voted

to employ a rural director of religious education. They did this by getting permission from their Mission Board to set aside some of their benevolence money for this purpose.

The new director began her work by starting Vacation Church Schools. She drove out to her first community and presented her plan to the pastor of one of the two churches there. An interesting discussion followed the suggestion.



City churches are beginning to look upon the surrounding countryside as a part of their religious responsibility. They are no longer stopping at the city limits.

"Why can't we have this school for the children of the other church as well?" asked the young wife of this student pastor. It was agreed that all children in the community should be invited.

In the next community there were also two churches, and likewise in the third. By that time some one raised the question as to why one of the other city churches should not likewise be asked to provide such a worker.

The city pastor put the matter up to his officials and by the

end of the week the second trained worker had arrived. The deacons employed this director only for the two summer months the first year, but the following year a full-time worker was secured.

The vestry of the third denomination quickly became interested in doing its share. A worker was secured for the summer months for two years; after that a well-trained full-time director was employed. Half her salary is paid by the city church and half by the diocese.

The fourth church had been urged by its woman's missionary society for some time to enter into this city-rural coöperative plan. The session likewise had taken favorable action on the matter, but the pastor's absence had delayed the procedure. Soon, however, the fourth worker was in the county. All four were well trained, all were graduates of courses or schools of religious education, and all were giving their time to work with rural children.

During the summer previous to the employment of this first rural religious director only one Vacation Church School had been conducted in the entire county. The summer the coöperative plan was started 9 such schools were held, with an attendance of 450 children and with 40 volunteer teachers assisting. The next summer these schools were held in 31 different communities, with a total attendance of 1,337 children and with 171 volunteer teachers. Fifty rural churches coöperated.

The Vacation Schools are only a small fraction of the work of these four directors. Week-day religious education classes are held in coöperation with the public schools in 80 communities. As a result of this city-rural church coöperation 1,849 children are receiving regular religious instruction each week in connection with their public-school work.

The county is divided into four quarters. The Presbyterian director is responsible for the northeast section. The Episcopal worker takes charge of the southeast quarter. Next comes the Methodist, and then the Baptist. These representatives of the four city churches do interdenominational work. The children are being taught vital religious truths, in terms of their own age experience.

These four representatives, in addition to working in their

respective sections of the county, are also specialists in the training program. The Presbyterian director is Young People's superintendent in the county Council of Religious Education. The Methodist specializes in Primary methods. The Episcopal leader is a specialist in handwork. The Baptist makes her contribution in the development of worship and music. The second annual county rural musical festival had an attendance of 1,500, with one third of that number taking part in a program which continued from ten o'clock in the morning until ten at night.

Religion is growing in the hearts of the children and youth of this county because these four city churches are assuming their responsibility in this splendid way.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. City churches, because of their strength, larger membership, greater financial income, and more leaders, have a responsibility to the surrounding rural churches.

The Scripture of the Chapter. In addition to the Scripture given here, the group might discuss the missionary spirit of Paul and raise the question as to how different the Christian world would be if Paul had never gone outside of the walls of Damascus or Tarsus to preach.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. In most states we have the county unit for all types of social welfare work—the county nurse, the county superintendent of the poor, the county superintendent of schools, the county librarian, the county agricultural agent, and the county home demonstration agent.

Discuss the advisability of a county director of religious education in each of the three thousand counties of the United States. If this is a good plan how can we get it started?

2. A discouraged farmer in discussing the relation between city and rural churches in his county said, "The city people pray for us on Sunday and prey on us during the rest of the week."

Discuss this attitude, its cause and its remedy.

3. In the county described in this chapter the cost of the four rural directors of religious education and the one city director is $7,500 a year. They give regular religious instruction to 3,000 children. In this same county 7 boys and 5 girls are costing $8,400 for their maintenance in reform schools. In view of this fact, do you think that these city churches are spending too much on religious education? If not, what about other city churches doing the same thing?

SOMETHING TO DO

Arrange for a joint conference between some city and rural churches to see if a church program of urban-rural relations can be formulated.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"A Study of Town-Country Relationships," by Hoffer, 20 pages. Michigan State College Bulletin, free. Illustrations given from a careful study in Michigan.

"Town and Country Relations," by American Country Life Association, 222 pages. University of Chicago Press, $2.00. Nearly all phases of this subject discussed by national leaders.

"Urban-Rural Relations," by Taylor and Frame, 246 pages. $1.00. A source book on this subject.

"The New Call," by McLaughlin, 192 pages. $1.25. Emphasizes the importance of the rural church.

CHAPTER XII

THE RURAL PARISH OF THE FUTURE

The Gist of the Chapter. Fewer people live on farms than formerly. This decreases rural Church membership. Agricultural prices are low and thus Church support is small. Other things have come in to take the farmer's time and interests and also his money. Denominational competition increases the problems. The second church in a small community is like a mortgage on the farm.

There is a shift of emphasis from preaching and pastoral work to religious education. This calls for a new program.

It costs more to run a church now than it did twenty years ago. Better-trained ministers are required and higher salaries are needed. The minister's automobile costs more than did the old horse and buggy.

Many solutions of these problems are being attempted. If a church can't hire a resident minister it often employs a man simply to preach on Sunday. It may become a preaching "point" on a circuit. Competitive churches are federating. In some cases there is a mutual exchange of churches. The Larger Parish Plan is the most recent solution of the rural church problem.

Farm and village people are facing squarely the many problems of their rural church, and are setting themselves to the solution. "Let us rise up and build," is their united cry. They possess the same spirit of determination that was shown by Nehemiah in the Scripture below.

The Scripture

So I came to Jerusalem, and was there three days. And I arose in the night, I and some few men with me; neither told I any man what my God put into my heart to do for Jerusalem; neither was there any beast with me, save the beast that I rode upon. And I went out by night by the valley gate, even toward the jackal's well, and to the

dung gate, and viewed the walls of Jerusalem, which were broken down, and the gates thereof were consumed with fire. Then I went on to the fountain gate and to the king's pool: but there was no place for the beast that was under me to pass. Then went I up in the night by the brook, and viewed the wall; and I turned back, and entered by the valley gate, and so returned. And the rulers knew not whither I went, or what I did; neither had I as yet told it to the Jews, nor to the priests, nor to the nobles, nor to the rulers, nor to the rest that did the work.

Then said I unto them, Ye see the evil case that we are in, how Jerusalem lieth waste, and the gates thereof are burned with fire: come, and let us build up the wall of Jerusalem, that we be no more a reproach. And I told them of the hand of my God which was good upon me, as also of the king's words that he had spoken unto me. And they said, Let us rise up and build. So they strengthened their hands for the good work.

—Neh. 2:11-18.

FEWER PEOPLE CALL FOR LARGER PARISHES

Review the situation pointed out in Chapter XI. There was a time when nearly every farmer had a hired hand. This employee usually had a wife and children. Probably a tenant and his family lived in a small house on the back road.

When the owner of this farm bought his new tractor, hay loader, milking machine, or perhaps a combine, the hired man and his family left and the tenant and his family moved away. Machinery hummed on the farm during the week, but everything around the little church seemed empty and discouraging on Sunday.

Those who are left to hold the church offices and teach the Sunday School classes sometimes feel like Nehemiah, no doubt, as he viewed the broken walls of Jerusalem. But in the hearts of all rural church folk is arising the determination of Nehemiah: "Let us rise up and build." In this instance, they do not need to build more churches, but fewer churches—in other words, to build larger parishes.

THE AGRICULTURAL SITUATION

A church supervisor was recently complaining regarding the small salary which a rural church was paying its pastor.

He was undoubtedly right about this pastor's needing a more adequate salary. In the discussion, however, he was told that the farmers in this church were "hard up."

"Hard up!" he exclaimed. "I never ate such meals in the city as I get out there! Hard up? They all have automobiles! And trucks! And tractors! They don't look hard up to me!"

He was partly right. It is true, as he said, that every farmer has a car. A farmer would get run over on the roads nowadays if he didn't have one. As a rule he uses it for business. In a certain state a study of who uses the roads revealed the fact that only 12 per cent of the cars actually on the roads belong to farmers. In defense of the farmer's owning a truck, it might be said that according to a recent survey he nets 43 cents an hour for his labor while using a truck as against 16 cents an hour while hauling with horses. He can't afford to be without a truck.

With no increase in farm income this farmer's taxes are two and a half times what they were ten years ago. As a matter of fact, farmers only receive 10 per cent of the nation's income. Ten years ago they received 20 per cent. "Farm relief" is being discussed, not only at the nation's Capital, but in every Grange hall, around the stove in every country store, and especially around the family fireside. It is harder than ever for farmers to support their rural churches adequately.

A decreasing farm population and the "agricultural slump" bring us face to face with a reorganization of our rural parishes. We need larger parishes in order to support our pastors adequately.

NEW INTERESTS IN THE COUNTRY

"Sixty years ago, when I was a boy," complains grandfather, "the church was crowded on Sunday."

It is well that he remembers the "big days" at church and not the "rainy Sundays." He no doubt had a sincere interest in worship while at church. But there were others who went to the same church in those days because there was no place else for them to go. It was where neighbors visited, where

men reviewed the crop outlook, where mothers asked about the health of other families. The boys met the girls at church. It is rumored that many a farmer broke his colts while driving to and from church on Sundays.

But soon after grandfather's boyhood days, the Grange started. This furnished another visiting place. Then the telephones gave an opportunity for neighbors constantly to

New interests, such as moving pictures, radios, and commercialized recreation, are apt to take people's interests away from the church. This rural church has a year-round social program which holds the youth and helps to increase the church membership.

keep in touch with one another. Twenty years ago the Farm Bureau, the Home Bureau, the Four-H Clubs, and the Parent-Teacher Associations had their rise. They were new, and therefore interesting. Soon more interests arose. Rotary, Kiwanis, and other clubs sprang up. Sunday papers began to deluge the countryside. Lastly the radio filled the air. Behold the array of interests calling for a farmer's attention, and incidentally his time and money!

A farmer may read a Sunday paper while listening to the radio, but he can't attend church while doing other things. He can't give the money to the church that he uses for Farm Bureau dues. A radio costs more than a church organ. If a local leader must spend her evenings preparing her nutrition lesson for the next Home Bureau meeting, she is not at the same time studying her Sunday School lesson.

Thus these new interests crowd upon us. Our church is our most beloved institution. Nevertheless our interests are divided.

Therefore, the church, to hold our interest nowadays, must be a more efficient institution. It must be as practical as the Farm Bureau, as friendly as the Grange, with as great an emphasis on child welfare as the Parent-Teacher Association, and with food for the hungering soul besides. How much is demanded of a modern rural minister!

The church that can hold people's interests now is not the church of the "good old days." The walls of the former churches are broken down like those which Nehemiah viewed in the nighttime. But the modern church, with its new methods, must arise to take its place. "Let us rise up and build."

INCREASED CHURCH EXPENSES

Formerly ministers came home from a day of pastoral calling with the gift of a sack of oats under the buggy seat. But no one has ever seen a man at a filling station hail the ministers who pass in order to fill their gasoline tanks. It costs more to be a rural preacher now, in the days of automobiles, than formerly.

Educational standards for ministers are higher, too, and more expensive. The many institutes and summer schools are necessary, but costly.

Other workers in the country are receiving increased salaries. County nurses usually receive about $2,000 a year in addition to travel expenses. County librarians receive from $1,500 to $2,500. The average salary of the fifty-five county agricultural agents in New York State for recent years shows a steady increase as is indicated by the following table:

1924—$2,814
1925—$2,848
1926—$2,947
1927—$2,992
1928—$3,084
1929—$3,140

The salaries of rural pastors undoubtedly should show a similar increase. In addition to salaries, there is an increased proportion of the budget going for benevolences.

With fewer people in the country now than formerly; with a ten-year economic depression; with other new interests calling for time, money, and leadership; and with the increased cost of running a church, farmers are showing a great loyalty and devotion to their churches to stand by them as they are doing.

Yet a new type of administration is needed to overcome these obstacles. The parishes must be larger. There must be a ministry to areas instead of simply to members. There must be a specialized ministry. A new rural church program must be built. "Let us rise up and build."

COÖPERATION INSTEAD OF COMPETITION

"Nearly half the milk-receiving plants could be closed at a saving to dairymen," a careful survey in New York State revealed. "In one area in the state, 14 milk stations could do the work of 31 and thus save $40 a year for each farm. Yet this would increase the average distance from the farm to the milk plant by only one half mile."

"Farmers living more than four miles from a plant," says Professor Leland Spencer, who made this study, "can have their milk hauled for half as much, by coöperatively paying a commercial hauler, as it would cost for an individual to haul his own milk."

Two farmers in Ohio, living across the road from each other, were asked why they didn't haul their milk coöperatively, each taking both cans on alternate weeks.

"I never thought of that," was the reply of one. "He might miss the train with my milk," said the other.

In a Maryland community the same question was asked of two neighbors. The answer of one was typical of the distrust

of former days: "My week might come in the very busiest time of the year," said he.

These incidents happened twenty years ago. One would not find such provincialism to-day. Coöperative producing, buying, and selling is now practiced by two million progressive farmers.

One of the most practical ways for farmers to build a new rural parish is to put the same coöperative spirit into religion which they are putting into marketing. Coöperative church work demands the same method and attitude as coöperative marketing.

If our rural population is decreasing and many parishes are too small, to cut these into two parts by denominational competition increases our church problems. If farmers find it difficult to support one church adequately under present economic conditions, an attempt to support two in the same small community wastes what money is available. If new interests and new organizations are arising daily to take men's loyalty away from the Church to other institutions, we make the situation still worse by obscuring the Church's objectives through sectarian bickerings.

Denominational competition in a small rural community is like a mortgage on a farm where the owner is already having his struggles to get along.

SOLUTIONS

Decreasing population, agricultural depression, the rise of other rural interests, the increased cost of running a church, denominational competition—these are our problems. What are the solutions?

Many churches when they get too small to pay a minister employ a "part-time preacher."

A certain small village with a decreasing population had two churches, a Baptist and a Congregational. The Nazarenes have recently added a third church. During the past year the Baptist church employed a bookkeeper from a near-by city to preach on Sundays. The Congregationalists hired a photographer to come out from town on Sunday mornings to preach. It happens that the photographer is also a Baptist. Both preachers, however, did not complete the year's service. Both

pulpits are again vacant. The Nazarenes have employed a neighboring farmer to fill their pulpit. These pastors are "part-time preachers."

The churches of this village, however, are setting out to change this situation. They are now making plans to unite with other neighboring churches in the organization of a larger parish.

Denominations with the "connectional" form of government meet the present rural church problem by adding more churches to charges. If half a church's membership moves to town, and the other half cannot support a minister, this church is made an "afternoon preaching appointment" on another circuit. The Institute of Social and Religious Research tells us that the more churches each pastor has, the more certain it is that each church will decline. We must build a different system than this if we are to solve our problems.

Many small communities with competitive churches have attempted "federation." Two churches employ one pastor who preaches to the united congregation. There are from ten to seventy-five federated churches in each state.

This is better than the old competitive plan but leaves much to be desired. Each of the federated churches keeps its own organization and officers. The pastor cares for both groups. It is a "polygamous" arrangement and not a real union. We will some day build a better plan than this.

Denominational supervisors quite universally recommend the "mutual exchange" of churches in competitive fields. Both churches unite with one denomination in one parish and with the other denomination in the other field. This plan has much to commend it. If our denominational supervisors would do more than simply recommend this plan—that is, study together their competitive fields and in a statesmanlike, constructive way actively enter into a program of readjustment—they would lift the mortgage of the competitive church from many rural communities.

THE LARGER PARISH PLAN RECOMMENDED

The "larger parish" plan is a coöperative ministry by a group of churches to an area or large parish.

By this coöperative arrangement many things can be done

that cannot be done by separate churches or circuits or charges. For example, one rural church alone cannot employ a specially trained religious-education director. A group of churches organized into a larger parish always has such a specialist, and often two such workers.

One church often finds it difficult to make arrangements with the school authorities for week-day religious education on school time. A united request from a group of churches working interdenominationally usually receives a favorable reply.

If one church alone starts a Scout program, the neighboring church watches to see that this energetic church doesn't "steal" away some boys or girls that do not belong to it. If the churches are working on a coöperative plan, such as the larger parish, one pastor or special worker may be in charge of the Scout program for the entire area.

Where each church looks out for its own membership and its own constituency, there is usually a "no man's land" between churches. The larger parish plan is a ministry to families, regardless of denominational ancestry or connection. This plan takes care of "no man's land." A Protestant director of religious education recently brought to the Catholic priest a list of nine children in the larger parish where she was working. These children were from neglected Catholic homes. A Baptist director of religious education gathered up nearly thirty young people recently in the larger parish in which she was working and took them to a Methodist Epworth League Institute.

A group of churches in one larger parish prints a real parish paper and sends it into each of the thousand homes in that area. Single churches would need to use mimeographed sheets or boiler-plate papers instead of a live church paper.

A group of 14 churches in one larger parish, as was pointed out in a previous chapter, held Sunday afternoon outdoor vesper services with an average attendance of 1,200 for the nine summer Sundays. One church working alone could not have arranged for such noted speakers, furnished such interesting music, or ministered to 1,200 people each Sunday.

A specialized ministry by a group of churches to each family in a large area is the plan of the larger parish. It aims to serve all the people. Not only are men to be saved

but the whole community is to be lifted to a higher economic, social, and moral plane.

As Nehemiah set about the building of the walls around Jerusalem with a resolute purpose, so our rural people are setting out to establish these efficient larger parishes.

"One of the outstanding needs in the reconstruction of the religion of country life," says M. A. Dawber, superintendent of the department of rural work of the National Methodist Board of Home Missions, "is that of a reorganization of the churches in certain geographical areas. The larger parish is a plan to meet this need."

"The larger parish plan," says Malcolm Dana, director of town and country work of the Congregational denomination, "harmonizes with modern ideas."

Warren H. Wilson, director of town and country church work of the Presbyterian Board of National Missions, was the first rural church leader to point out the need for this new type of parish. The Home Missions Council, composed of twenty or more denominations, has now approved the plan.

Rural people love their church as they love no other institution. They are looking forward hopefully to the formation of new, efficient larger parishes. May we all strengthen our hands to the task.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. Rural churches are presented with many and interesting problems. But there is a spirit of courage in the countryside, and a fine loyalty to the rural church exists. Some successful solutions of the problems are summarized in this chapter.

The Scripture of the Chapter. The walls of Jerusalem have been torn down many times but always some loyal and devout soul such as Nehemiah has rebuilt them. As you face your own church problems, read over the Bible story given in this chapter and try to catch the contagion of the venturesome spirit of this leader of old.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION

1. Do you think your church means more or less to its members than it did thirty years ago? Why do you think so?
2. It is generally agreed that well-trained rural ministers should receive more adequate salaries. What new method of church administration would you suggest to meet this need?
3. Farmers coöperate in threshing wheat, filling silos, hauling milk, consolidating schools, and in Farm Bureau work and in the Grange.

The "larger parish" is a plan for churches to coöperate. Is such a plan needed in this community?

4. Do you think improved farm machinery has benefited agriculture? Give reasons for your opinion.

5. How has improved farm machinery affected the rural churches?

SOMETHING TO DO

Arrange a forum or discussion meeting at the church, Grange, or some community center, and ask a number of people to discuss different phases of the rural church work. This will arouse interest in a better church. People are more willing to work for something in which they have a part. Keep the spirit of hope for a better church in all this discussion.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"The Farmer's Church," by Wilson, 260 pages. Century, $2.00. A plan of church work, based upon religious service to all rural folk, by a national rural church leader.

"Our Templed Hills," by Felton, 241 pages. Missionary Education Movement, $1.00. Presents the changing rural life and its relation to the church.

"Beyond City Limits," by Goodwin, 263 pages. Church Missions House, $1.00. Suitable for a discussion course in a rural church.

CHAPTER XIII

AN EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM FOR OUR CHURCH

The Gist of the Chapter. At the State College of Washington, located at Pullman, a study was made of a group of students to discover where the active Church workers in the student body came from. Did they come from large, efficient, well-organized city churches? Or did they come from churches in the open country or in the small agricultural village? It was found that 90 per cent of the students from rural communities were active in the churches in that college town, while only 23 per cent of the city students were thus active. The table showing the result of this study throws light on the place of the rural church in training leaders.

CHURCH ACTIVITY OF 510 STUDENTS OF ONE DENOMINATION AT THE STATE COLLEGE OF WASHINGTON

Population of Communities from Which They Came	Percentage of These Students Active in Churches
Rural (under 800)	90 per cent
800— 2,000	60 per cent
2,000— 10,000	35 per cent
10,000— 25,000	32 per cent
25,000—300,000	23 per cent

We see by this table that the rural church offers a great opportunity for training leaders. In a country community everyone must do something. A certain number of things must be done in every church and in the rural church there are fewer people to do them, so everyone must help. Thus we learn to do by doing.

We also learn to do by studying. Study classes and activities get people ready to become leaders. We hear about a need, we discuss it, we study it, we organize to do something about it; thus we prepare ourselves to become leaders.

There is an undeveloped leadership in every community. We sometimes feel that great leaders, efficient Sunday School

teachers, musicians, and other workers must come from far away. On the contrary, it is from our own church that our leaders usually must be selected and trained. Amos, the humble herdsman, was called from his flocks on the hills of Tekoa to become a great teacher. David, the shepherd, came not from some distant city or office but from the sheepfolds of Judea to become a shepherd of his people. Peter and Andrew left their nets to enter their three years of training with Jesus to "become fishers of men." Jesus called the twelve Galilæans to "be with him"; thus they were trained for their great work.

The Scripture

Then answered Amos, and said to Amaziah, I was no prophet, neither was I a prophet's son; but I was a herdsman, and a dresser of sycomore-trees: and Jehovah took me from following the flock, and Jehovah said unto me, Go, prophesy unto my people Israel.

—Amos 7:14, 15.

From following the ewes that have their young he brought him,
To be the shepherd of Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.
So he was their shepherd according to the integrity of his heart,
And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands.

—Ps. 78:71, 72.

And walking by the sea of Galilee, he saw two brethren, Simon who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you fishers of men.

—Matt. 4:18, 19.

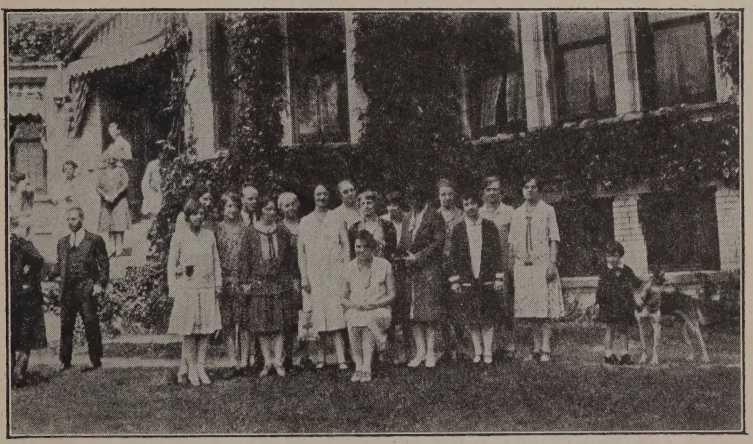
And he goeth up into the mountain, and calleth unto him whom he himself would; and they went unto him. And he appointed twelve, that they might be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach.

—Mark 3:13, 14.

THE DAY OF TRAINING CLASSES

The educational program of the local church depends upon its leadership. The successful use of graded lessons is determined as much by the teacher as by the lessons themselves. The implanting of Christian ideals, the development of Chris-

tian faith, and the nurture of Christian character through study, discussion, worship, and recreational and service activities, are accomplished as much through leadership as through any programs or groups or organizations. When we think, therefore, of the educational program of the local church we must think largely in terms of leadership, and leaders must be trained. A program calling for Sunday School classes and departments, for societies for worship and discussion and service, and for clubs and other organizations with their con-



The rural church should be well represented in summer training schools, either denominational or interdenominational.

structive activities, cannot be carried forward without leaders who have knowledge of what they are to teach, who have an understanding of the boys and girls or older people whom they are to teach or lead, and who have acquired skill for their work.

Outside leaders cannot be imported into any church or community in sufficient numbers to carry on the educational program. Local people must be trained for such service.

This is the day of "short courses" for farmers. In one week alone at a certain agricultural college fifty-six lectures, demonstrations, and conferences were offered for visiting poultry men. The production of eggs is too important a task to

undertake without training. The people who attend these classes learn how to feed, to cull, and to care for their flocks. They learn the balanced rations needed for a chick. They learn how to fight parasites and disease. They cull out the nonlayers and thus conserve profits. They believe in taking time to study their job.

The way we care for the children in our Sunday School, the young people in our church, and the newcomers in our community is surely as important a task as poultry-raising. It needs church leaders who are willing to study and prepare for their work in the same diligent way in which these poultry men studied their job.

Some 13,000 young men to-day are in agricultural colleges spending four busy years to prepare themselves to care for calves or sheep or to analyze the soil or to fight plant diseases and pests. About 90 per cent of these young men go back into agricultural pursuits and become our future rural leaders. Alongside of their training in animal husbandry and fruit culture they should receive training for leadership in religious education and social welfare. They should be the leaders in the educational program of their local church. This is a day when training in church work as well as in agriculture is important.

In addition to the regular four-year students, colleges of agriculture offer short courses. The report of one such college shows that 9,000 farmers registered in the 20 or more short schools of agriculture on the campus during one year. Training for the work of the church must keep pace with other preparation.

A CHURCH TRAINING SCHOOL

A certain church conducts a training school for its members each year during the winter months. The program for the current year includes five courses. The members of the group eat supper together from 6.15 to 6.45 and thus enjoy a half hour of fellowship. The pastor next leads his church officials in a class in "Church Building and Equipment." He is planning a new religious education plant and uses this method of working out the plans. A young college graduate and trained

teacher gives demonstrations at the same period in the various methods of conducting a Sunday School class. After this forty-five-minute period of class work, all meet together for the "assembly period" and listen to a half hour's talk on some mission field. During the next session three classes are held: The parents of young children are provided with a unique course, "How to Teach Religion in the Home." The teachers have another class in "The Use of Dramatics in Religious Education." The young people meet in a class in "Recreational Leadership." This "School for Church Workers," as it is called, continues for six Wednesday nights during February and March. The attendance last year was over 200. This church, instead of complaining about "the lack of leaders," is training a large group of new leaders each year. It is keeping abreast with other institutions in its educational program.

CONFERENCES FOR SUPERINTENDENTS AND TEACHERS

A certain county interested in training its religious-education workers conducts a conference each month from September to April for its Sunday School superintendents and teachers. The group, usually about seventy, meets at a different church each month. From 6.30 to 7.30 is the supper period, after which the members divide into departmental discussion groups. The children's workers meet together. The leaders of young people discuss their problems. The superintendents and the adults also hold their conferences. The time from 8.00 to 9.30 is taken up entirely with demonstrations. The demonstrations which have filled the present year's programs during the successive months are as follows:

"Methods of Teaching"; "How to Organize an Adult Bible Class"; "The Use of Hymns"; "The Method of Keeping Sunday School Records"; "How to Conduct a Sunday School Class"; "Dramatization of a Bible Story"; "A Sunday School Teachers' Meeting"; "A Worship Period for Juniors"; "How to Conduct a Parents' Class"; "A Worship Service for Intermediates"; "A Worship Service for Adults"; "A Worship Service for Young People."

Classes of children or young people are brought to these conferences to take part in the demonstrations. The teachers and superintendents sit in the rear of the room and observe the methods and take notes. After each demonstration there is a period for discussion and questions. The chairman tries to bring out the specific things about each demonstration that were helpful to each teacher and officer present; instead of being told what to do, they are shown how to do it. Instead of fault being found with "poor teaching" and "jazz church music" and "inefficient officers," the group is given a spirit of hope and confidence. Success is made a reality. People get new faith in themselves and in the possibility of a real educational program for their several churches.

WORKERS' CONFERENCES

One of the most successful of rural churches holds regular workers' conferences. All officers of the church are invited. The attendance is usually about thirty. The pastor often mimeographs a number of questions or topics for discussion and action by the church.

It is little wonder that this church out in the open country has recently built a new $50,000 religious-education plant. The members of this church are trained. They are trained to think through their common religious problems.

A MINISTER OF MUSIC

There is a new and encouraging attitude in our rural churches to-day regarding the worship side of church life. Many churches in the past have thought of the devotional part of the Sunday session as "opening exercises." We "pepped them up" by singing "lively," the "men against the women," one side of the house taking the first stanza and the other side taking the second. The worship portion of the church service was filled with announcements and extemporaneous remarks. A completely changed attitude is now evident in many of our churches. We feel that this worship part of the church service is the most important. We think of the singing of hymns as praise to God and use hymns that are written for this purpose.

A certain group of five near-by rural churches has employed a minister of music. This director comes once a week and for three hours in the evening trains all these churches in the use of music in worship. Each church has a children's choir, as well as another for adults. The choirs are robed and the churches have a processional and recessional. The members learn not only the hymns but the prayer responses and the various parts of the worship service. One Sunday evening a month these five churches meet together in a big, united service with the united choirs taking part.

By this method they are including music and the training in the devotional life as a part of their educational program.

A PROGRAM OF SERVICE AND EVANGELISM

Roadman, in his book on "The Country Church and Its Program," tells of a young farmer who was forced into bankruptcy. He was a good farmer, yet because of sickness in the family and crop failures on the farm he was forced to sell out his belongings to pay his debts. He was not a Church member but was counted on as a good citizen. Much to the surprise of his neighbors, he was intoxicated on the morning of his bankruptcy sale. This was the first time his neighbors had ever heard of his using intoxicants. He soon left the community, not only broken financially but broken in spirit. His courage and self-respect, as well as his farm and live stock, were gone.

How would his condition have been changed if his neighboring Church members had taken an interest in him? Suppose that it had been the custom in that rural church for the members to go out two by two each year to make a visit in every home, to show a friendly interest in the nonmembers, to offer help, or to win the man to the ideals of Jesus and to the program of the Church. A loan of a thousand dollars by the neighbors would have saved that man his farm and home. Other assistance might have been given at the time of the family sickness. Help in his health and financial difficulties would have made him most sympathetic to the gospel message. Salvation is a comprehensive term. Many churches are going out to homes and giving this personal help. Instead of waiting

for the people to come to their pews, they are taking sympathy and help and the evangelistic message into each home.

A certain rural church arranged for its principal workers to go out, usually in twos, to make a friendly visit in every home in the community. About 200 such visits were made during the evenings of three weeks. People were thus won

In this group of leaders of boys' and girls' clubs in southern Indiana a minister is present who encourages Four-H Club work from his pulpit as he preaches missions or tithing, because he finds in it great values for character-building. Sixty young people joined his country church on Easter. Nineteen of his young people are attending college. Seventy-five boys belong to his athletic association. Two of his young men are studying for the ministry.

to Christ and the workers were trained. The following year the members of this same church took what they called their "prospects" as objects of prayer. Three members took one "prospect," for whom they prayed and whom they tried to win to Christ.

Many churches are following similar programs of personal

evangelism. Thus they are making their educational program complete.

PLANNING THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

The educational program for the local church should be planned to meet its own particular needs. The material in the preceding pages of this chapter reports what has been done in a number of rural churches. These facts are suggestive. Each church, however, should make a survey of its own field and plan its own program. This should include the Sunday School, the Week Day Church School, the Vacation Church School, the societies for the various age groups, clubs of various kinds, the leadership training department or classes, and so forth. The program should be unified, so that two organizations will not attempt to do the same thing with the same group and so that all the educational needs of all the members of the community to which the church ministers shall be met.

Two books which are texts in the Standard Leadership Training Course will help leaders in the local church to face the question of an educational program. These are: "Religious Education in the Modern Church," by William C. Bower, and "The Church as a School," by Harry C. Munro.

FOR THE DISCUSSION GROUP

The Theme of the Chapter. The program of the rural church presented in the foregoing chapters all depends upon securing the necessary leaders. We are trained for these tasks. This training is called in this chapter, "The Educational Program of Our Church."

The Scripture of the Chapter. Many characters in the Bible other than Amos or David or the twelve disciples, such as Gideon, Samuel, Elisha, or Paul, might be suggested by members of the class as illustrating how a great leader was found in a local group to lead out into a great task.

SOMETHING TO DO

Below are two lists of projects which you may undertake. The first list includes ways in which you may help the church in its educational program. The second suggests things which you may do that will help to develop you as a leader in the educational program of the church. The activities suggested in the first list will in themselves afford opportunities for training for better leadership. Mark with a cross ☒

the service or training which you are willing to undertake, and report your decision to the pastor or the leader of your class.

Service Projects

☐ Teach in a Vacation Church School.

☐ Furnish a car to bring children to Sunday School or Vacation Church School.

☐ Play the piano in Sunday School, in Vacation Church School, or in other meeting.

☐ Teach a Sunday School class.

☐ Assist in secretarial work in the Sunday School.

☐ Help in a house-to-house friendly visitation campaign to get prospective members for the church and Sunday School.

☐ Do personal evangelistic work.

☐ Lead a Four-H Club.

☐ Lead a Pioneer Boys' Club, a Boy Scout troop, or other boys' group.

☐ Lead a Pioneer Girls' Club, a Girl Scout troop, Camp Fire Girls, or other girls' group.

Training Projects

☐ Enroll in a leadership training class.

☐ Enroll in a summer training school.

☐ Enroll in a Standard training school.

☐ Read at least two books a year such as have been suggested in this chapter or in other chapters of this book.

☐ Take a correspondence course, provided by the denominational headquarters, in some phase of religious education.

HELPFUL BOOKS ON THIS CHAPTER

"Sunday School in Town and Country," by Somerndike, 151 pages. Presbyterian Board of Christian Education, $1.25. A brief but practical book on the educational program for a rural church.

"Fifty Famous Farmers," by Ivins and Winship, 407 pages. Macmillan, $2.00. Challenging stories of the lives of fifty men who have made great contributions to agricultural life in America.

"The Country Church and Its Program," by Roadman, 143 pages. Methodist Book Concern, 50 cents. A discussion book of thirteen chapters, suitable for the use of an adult Sunday School class for one quarter, which deals with the problems and program of a rural church.

"Religious Education in the Modern Church," by Bower, 270 pages. Bethany Press, $1.35. This book deals with the aims, principles, and agencies of religious education in the Church.

"The Church as a School," by Munro, 270 pages. Bethany Press, $1.35. This book deals with the organization of the Church School, especially the Sunday School.

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